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the PALIMPSEST

Massacre at the Gardner Cabin

The Spirit Lake Massacre

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SPIRIT LAKE MASSACRE SPECIAL EDITION . . . FIFTY CENTS

The Meaning of Palimpsest

In early times a palimpsest was a parchment or other material from which one or more writings had been erased to give room for later records. But the erasures were not always complete; and so it became the fascinating task of scholars not only to translate the later records but also to reconstruct the original writings by deciphering the dim fragments of letters partly erased and partly covered by subsequent texts.

The history of Iowa may be likened to a palimpsest which holds the record of successive generations. To decipher these records of the past, reconstruct them, and tell the stories which they contain is the task of those who write history.

Contents

Illustrations

All pictures unless otherwise noted are from various editions of Abbie Gardner Sharp's *History of the Spirit Lake Massacre*. The map on the inside back cover is from Thomas Teakle's *The Spirit Lake Massacre*.
Front Cover: *Behind me I left my heroic father, murdered in a cowardly manner, in the very act of extreme hospitality . . . outside the door lay the three children — so dear to me — bruised, mangled, and bleeding. . . . A little farther on lay my Christ-like mother, who till the very last had pleaded the cause of her brutish murderers, literally weltering in her own blood. . . . Still farther on, at the southwest corner of the house, in a similar condition, lay my eldest sister, Mrs. Luce. . . .* From Abbie Gardner Sharp's *History of the Spirit Lake Massacre*.

The postcard pictures reproduced on the outside back cover were made in Germany for Abbie Gardner Sharp and were on sale in her museum.
Top: The Gardner cabin and portrait of Abbie Gardner Sharp.
Center: Interior of Gardner cabin with Abbie behind counter.
Bottom: Pioneer monument and graves; cabin and home in background.

Author

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THE PALIMPSEST

EDITED BY WILLIAM J. PETERSEN

VOL. XLIII ISSUED IN OCTOBER 1962 No. 10

Westward with the Gardners

The Spirit Lake Massacre is the bloodiest episode in the annals of Iowa. Measured in terms of sheer cruelty, wanton destruction, and fiendish torture for the few surviving captives, the massacre has few parallels in American history. Because it was perpetrated by a renegade Indian who was feared by members of his own tribe, the Spirit Lake Massacre must be differentiated from those bitter outbreaks of the red man led by such great leaders as King Phillip, Pontiac, Tecumseh, or Black Hawk.

The story of the Spirit Lake Massacre can best be told through the eyes of Abbie Gardner, who, as a child of fourteen, witnessed the bloody carnage and underwent all the sufferings, horrors, and human indignities that could be meted out by a vicious and depraved band of outlaws. As related in her *History of the Spirit Lake Massacre and Captivity of Miss Abbie Gardner* (which first appeared in 1885 and went through nine editions by 1923) the story is replete with stark

drama, combining matchless courage and fortitude in the face of unbelievable adversity.

In her later years Abbie Gardner looked backward with fond memories to her childhood. Her father, Rowland Gardner, was a typical American frontiersman. Restless, energetic, courageous, Gardner was richly endowed with those New England virtues of thrift and industry, coupled with a belief in Almighty God and the need for education. Throughout his life, however, an all-consuming wanderlust drove him steadily westward to the American frontier.

Born in New Haven, Connecticut, in 1815, Gardner had been employed as a youth in a comb factory. The dull routine of a factory laborer held little interest for him so he moved westward to Twin Lakes in Seneca County, New York. There, on March 22, 1836, he married Frances M. Smith, who as time passed bore him four children — Mary M., Eliza M., Abigail, and Rowland. It is through the pen of Gardner's third child, Abigail, that most of our story henceforth will unfold.

Rowland Gardner was twenty-one years old at the time of his marriage in Twin Lakes, New York. He had just settled down after his first westward thrust in 1836, the first of several moves that ended exactly twenty-one years later on the banks of Lake Okoboji in northwestern Iowa. But in 1836 Iowa itself was young, having undergone white settlement for a period of only three years.

Price 25 cents.

HISTORY

OF THE

SPIRIT LAKE MASSACRE!

AND OF

MISS ABIGAIL GARDINER'S

THREE MONTHS' CAPTIVITY

AMONG THE INDIANS.

ACCORDING TO HER OWN ACCOUNT.

L. P. LEE, PUBLISHER,
NEW BRITAIN, CT.
1857.

[Cover of first printed account of massacre.]

A scant ten thousand whites lived in the Black Hawk Purchase and the Indian still held title to four-fifths of Iowa.

Twin Lakes was but the first of many moves by Rowland Gardner. Soon after Abigail was born at Twin Lakes in 1843, Gardner moved to Greenwood in western New York. In later years Abigail recalled the Canisteo River, the busy hum of her father's sawmill, and her happy school days. The recollection of her teachers — Lydia Davis and Sarah Starr — always brought back pleasant memories to her. Abbie recalls her parents as consistent members of the Methodist Episcopal Church. Her father was a strict temperance man, never using liquor or tobacco in any form, and he always sought to instill the principles of temperance and virtue in his children.

In 1850 the family was once more uprooted as Rowland Gardner found a more suitable sawmill at Rexville, a few miles from Greenwood in western New York. Here, in 1851, the eldest daughter, fifteen-year-old Mary, was wedded to Harvey Luce, of Huron, Ohio. The Luces left for Ohio at once and the Gardner family pulled up stakes two years later and set out across Ohio. At Norwalk they were joined by the Luces and their prattling "blue-eyed baby boy." Continuing on to northwestern Ohio and Indiana, Rowland Gardner took a contract for grading the Lake Shore and Michigan Southern Railroad. Abbie

continued her studies in Ohio and Indiana, but her formal school days ended when she was less than fourteen as her father made his final move far beyond the American frontier.

Rowland Gardner had always dreamed of a home across the Mississippi on one of the "far-famed prairies" of Iowa. Accordingly, in the fall of 1854, he left Indiana with his family, halted briefly at Joliet, Illinois, and then continued westward, crossing the Mississippi at Davenport. Despite the lateness of the season, the Gardner and Luce families continued in a northwesterly direction across the lush Iowa prairies toward the setting sun.

As their covered wagon creaked slowly westward, young Abigail noted that the settlements became "more scattered" and the villages smaller and "more remote" from each other. Some days passed without catching even a glimpse of a town. It was then that Abigail realized for the first time where the family was going. A few days more and Rowland Gardner would be in the very heart of the "great wild country" toward which his oxen steadily plodded.

"Crossing the Cedar river at Janesville," Abbie recalls, "we followed the valley of the Shell Rock until we came to the village bearing its name. We were only one hundred miles west of the Mississippi, but the chilly winds of October warned us of the approach of winter; and it was decided to

remain at Shell Rock until spring, or until the selection of lands on which to settle."

Shell Rock contained "no churches, no schoolhouses, not even a store" when the Gardners arrived in the fall of 1854. School and religious services were both held in private homes, Abbie notes, and the settlers had to go to Janesville for supplies. Although warm friends were made during the winter months, the Gardners were once more on the move the following March. According to Abbie: "Our course still led up the Shell Rock valley to where the town of Nora Springs now stands, thence west to Mason City, which consisted of one store and two or three other buildings; from here to Clear Lake — ten miles distant — the place of our destination."

It was while at Clear Lake that the Gardner family had its first experience with the Sioux Indians in what became popularly known as the "Grindstone War." One of the settlers, James Dickerson, had been visited by a band of Indians, one of whom chased and killed his only rooster, knocking down and breaking his grindstone during the pursuit. Furious at this wanton destruction, Dickerson felled the Indian with a piece of the grindstone while the entire band of Indians looked on. The Indians promptly demanded compensation for the wounded man, and he was finally given five or six dollars, some bed quilts, and several other less valuable articles.

Aware that the Sioux must be taught a lesson, a band of twenty-five men under the leadership of John Long of Mason City, marched from the scattered settlements leaving their wives and children unprotected, and in mortal fear of annihilation. When Long and his men reached the Indian camp, the chief indicated a desire to parley, the money and articles given by Mrs. Dickerson were all returned, the pipe of peace smoked, and the Sioux agreed to leave that part of the country, which they had previously vacated by the Treaty of 1851. Long and his men returned to their homes, to the joy of their families. The "Grindstone War" thus came to a happy end.

Meanwhile, rumors spread among the whites that the Sioux to the number of five thousand were encamped a few miles distant, prepared to attack and overwhelm the settlers. Panic-stricken, the Gardner family and all their neighbors retreated to what is now Nora Springs, where they pitched camp for three weeks, until the danger of Indian attack abated.

Abbie recorded in her book a personal crisis that occurred during the flight of the settlers from Clear Lake to the vicinity of Nora Springs.

> When the time came for our family to go I remembered an old hen, with a brood of young chickens, which I wished very much to take with me, as I feared they would be killed by the Indians or die of starvation. But no room for them could be found in the wagon, so I ran out just

before we started to take a farewell look, and lingered to pound for them some extra ears of corn, as they were too small to eat the whole kernels, and there being no mills within seventy miles the corn had to be cracked for them. With tearful eyes I parted from my chickens and took my place in the wagon, terrified with thoughts of the vicious Sioux, who were the cause of so much trouble.

When the family returned to their Clear Lake cabin, Abbie rushed to the barn to see her pets. "The old hen was gone," she records in her book, "but the chickens which in three weeks had grown nearly out of my knowledge were all nestled together in their accustomed corner."

Despite the danger from wandering bands of Indians, Rowland Gardner determined to push westward far beyond the frontier. Once more young Abbie recalls the sorrow attending such an uprooting.

Bidding adieu to the dear friends at Clear Lake, with whom we had shared so many privations, hardships, and dangers during the sixteen months we had tarried there, we again took up our line of march; in company with Harvey Luce and family, now consisting of himself, wife and two children — Albert, aged four years, and Amanda, one year. Our journey extended this time into the beautiful region of Spirit and Okoboji Lakes.

It required no little courage to traverse the trackless prairies of Iowa in the spring of 1856. As Abbie recalled in later years:

On the route taken, no traces of civilization were discernible west of Algona in Kossuth county. The Des

Moines river was unbridged, and the sloughs being filled with water were frequently impassable. On the way we frequently encountered the "redskins" by day, and were entertained at night by the howling of wolves. Still we went forward unhesitatingly in our lonely journey; driving the slow-footed oxen and wagons, loaded with household goods, agricultural implements, and provisions, making our own road over many miles of desolate prairie.

As long as danger from Indian attack was not imminent the Gardners could feast their eyes on the rich Iowa prairies.

The far-stretching prairie, clothed in its mantle of green, luxuriant grass, studded here and there with the golden stars of the resin-weed, and a thousand flowering plants of a humbler growth but no less brilliant hues, presented to the eye a scene of enchanting beauty, beside which the things of man's devising fade like stars before the morning sun. Nor were prairies the only attraction. Here and there a babbling brook and sparkling river came together, eager to join hands and be away to the sea; and along their banks were shady groves of maple, oak, and elm, festooned with wild grape, woodbine, bitter-sweet, and ivy, in most fantastic forms and prodigality. Herds of elk and deer, in all the grace of their native freedom, fed on the nutritious grasses, and sought shelter in groves. Every variety of wild fowl — in flocks which no man could number — filled the air and nested on the ground.

On July 16, 1856, the heavy emigrant wagons of Rowland Gardner and Harvey Luce lumbered to a stop on the shores of Lake Okoboji — an Indian name signifying "a place of rest." After prospecting for a few days the two men decided to

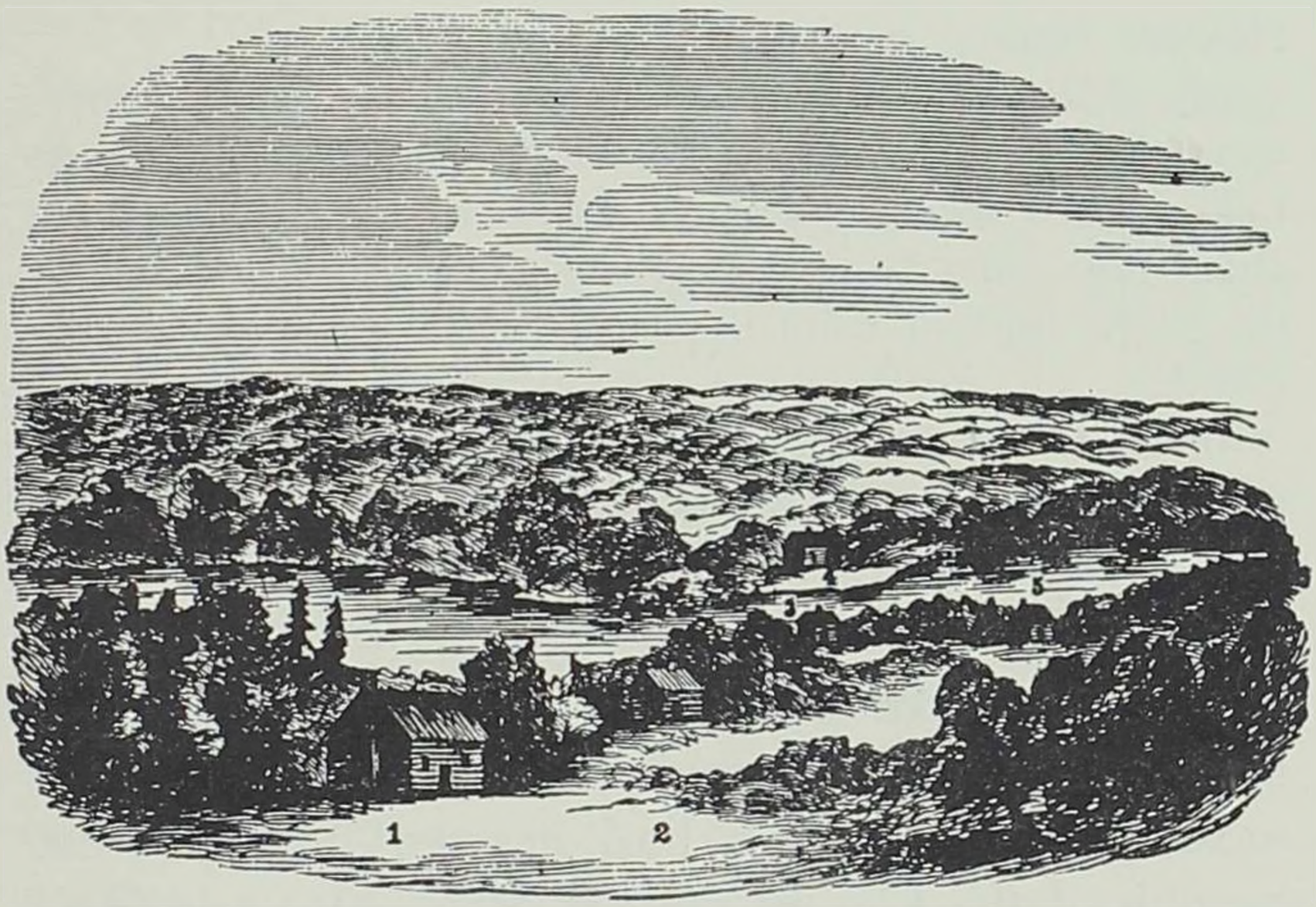
locate on the south shore of West Okoboji where Arnolds Park now stands. Gardner built his log cabin a few rods from the Lake. Harvey Luce began erecting his cabin a short distance to the east of the Gardner cabin, but was unable to finish it before the approach of winter. Both families accordingly occupied the Gardner cabin, which Abbie records was the "first dwelling" in Dickinson County. The new "Eldorado" proved a magnet for other settlers, however, so by November 1st six families and several single men were snugly housed within six miles of the Gardner cabin. The nearest trading center for these hardy souls was Fort Dodge, eighty miles to the southeast.

According to Abbie Gardner, four residents of Red Wing, Minnesota (William Granger, Carl Granger, Bertell A. Snyder, and Dr. I. H. Harriott) came to Lake Okoboji to hunt and fish in the summer of 1856. All were young bachelors except William Granger, who had left his family behind. Before snow fell the four men had erected a cabin on the peninsula north of the strait, between East and West Okoboji, now known as "Smith's Point." The other neighbors recorded by Abbie Gardner were:

James Mattock, with wife and five children, came from Delaware county, and established a home, south of the strait, nearly opposite the Granger cabin. These two dwellings stood in close proximity to each other. There was also with Mr. Mattock a man by the name of Robert

Mathieson, who had taken a homestead on the west shore of Okoboji Lake. His wife and four children remained in Delaware county, expecting to come in the spring.

Joel Howe's family consisted of himself, wife, and six children; besides four married children who were not at this time members of his household, and only one, Mrs. Nobles, was in the settlement. He settled on the east side



Thus forty persons . . . were dispersed among the picturesque groves, bluffs, and lakes of Dickinson County . . .

of East Okoboji, at the south side of the grove. The names and ages of their children were as follows: Jonathan, aged twenty-three, Sardis, eighteen, Alfred, fifteen, Jacob, thirteen, Philetus, eleven, and Levi, nine. Alvin Noble, son-in-law of Joel Howe, with his wife and one child, some two years old, and Joseph M. Thatcher, with wife and one child, seven months old, came with the fam-

ily of Mr. Howe, from Hampton, Franklin county. They were formerly from Howard county, Indiana. These two families also settled on the east side of East Okoboji, erecting one log cabin, which was occupied by both families. Their cabin was at the north end of the grove, about one mile from the home of Mr. Howe. . . .

There was also, residing for the winter with Messrs. Noble and Thatcher, a man by the name of Morris Markham, who also came from Hampton, and originally from Howard county, Indiana.

Mr. Marble and wife, who came from Linn county, were the first and at this time the only settlers on Spirit Lake. Their location was on the west shore of the lake, about four miles from the present town of Spirit Lake, in the south edge of what has since been known as Marble Grove.

Thus forty persons — men, women and children — were dispersed among the picturesque groves, bluffs, and lakes of Dickinson county. where the chief scenes of this narrative transpired.

In addition to the above, Abbie recalled small settlements at Springfield, (now Jackson) Minnesota. A few families had arrived on the west branch of the Des Moines in Palo Alto and Emmet counties, and a sprinkling of cabins along the Little Sioux between Smithland in Woodbury County and southern Clay County. All these points lay far beyond the frontier line of 1856 and were remote to the Okoboji pioneers perched on the very rim of settlement.

WILLIAM J. PETERSEN

Massacre on the Okobojis

Several remote and immediate causes led up to the Spirit Lake Massacre. First of all, a burning hatred for the white man's way of life had smouldered in the red man's breast since the founding of Jamestown in 1607 — exactly 250 years before the Spirit Lake Massacre. Secondly, the futile efforts of the Indian to arrest the westward surge of the pioneers is graphically revealed by Indian treaties, the most recent of which had ceded land in northern Iowa and adjacent Minnesota as late as 1851. Thirdly, unscrupulous white traders constantly preyed on the red man, causing bitter resentment. Fourthly, unprincipled whiskey runners were responsible for the physical, spiritual, and moral degradation of the red man. The situation was not alleviated by the Indian's laziness and improvident way of life. Although the American settler was rarely guilty of any of the above infractions, he was detested because cultivation of the soil meant the gradual disappearance of the Indians' hunting ground. The pioneers, on the other hand, were well aware of the Indians' proclivity to beg, steal, or take by force; their cunning and treachery was attested by lurid tales of burned log cabins, ravaged settlements, scalped

and mutilated victims, and captive women — a truly sordid story stretching over two centuries of time.

In addition to the above, there were several causes which led immediately to the Spirit Lake Massacre . . . an extremely bitter winter, the depraved character of Inkpaduta and his renegade Sioux followers, incidents around Smithland in Woodbury County, and the vulnerability of the isolated settlers in the Okoboji-Spirit Lake area. Let Abbie Gardner tell her own story:

> The winter of 1856-7 was one ever to be remembered by the people of Iowa and Minnesota for its bitter cold weather, deep snow, and violent storms, rendering communication between the different settlements almost impossible. Of course the settlers were illy prepared for any winter, and much less for such a one as this; for it must be remembered there was no lumber to be had within a hundred miles, and all the provisions, of every kind, except what might be captured from the lakes and groves, had to be brought a like distance. Some cabins were yet without floors; the doors were made of puncheons, hung on wooden hinges, and fastened with wooden latches. Our floor was made comfortable by leveling off the ground and covering it with prairie hay, over which a rag carpet was spread, which had been brought all the way from the state of New York. . . .
>
> In February, Mr. Luce and Mr. Thatcher started, with an ox-team and sled, to obtain provisions for their families. In spite of snow-banks, sometimes fifteen and twenty feet deep, in spite of wind and cold they reached Hampton, Shell Rock, Cedar Falls and Waterloo. They secured as large a supply as they thought possible to convey, with

their weary oxen, over the untrodden drifts, and succeeded in making their way back as far as Shippey's cabin, in Palo Alto county, about ten miles below Emmetsburg, on the Des Moines river. Here it was decided that Mr. Thatcher should remain to recruit the oxen, while Mr. Luce proceeded home, accompanied by three young men, who were making their first visit to the lakes. . . . Little did they imagine they were going to meet such a cruel death. By this delay of Mr. Thatcher he escaped the terrible fate of the doomed colony at the lakes.

During this same period, Inkpaduta, a renegade Wakpekutis Indian chief, had assumed the leadership of Wamdisappa's band which numbered anywhere from fifty to one hundred and fifty men, women, and children. According to Charles E. Flandrau, United States Indian Agent for the Sioux, the name Inkpaduta meant "Scarlet Point," but sometimes was translated "Red End." Inkpaduta and his band were considered a "bad lot of vagabonds" who caused a "great deal of trouble" to red men and white men alike. For killing the chief of the Wakpekuti, Inkpaduta had been outlawed by the band. As a result he roamed far and wide in the Big Sioux Valley and adjoining country. During the hard winter of 1856-1857, Inkpaduta and his followers probably suffered just as much as his more peaceable brethren.

Abbie Gardner was destined, as a captive of the Sioux, to become well-acquainted with the personality and character of Inkpaduta.

He supported himself by hunting and plunder; leading

a wandering, marauding life, the number of his followers varying from time to time from fifty to one hundred and fifty, as individuals of similar character, from different bands of Sioux, joined or deserted him.

. . . As I remember Inkpaduta, he was probably fifty or sixty years of age, about six feet in height, and strongly built. He was deeply pitted by smallpox, giving him a revolting appearance, and distinguishing him from the rest of the band. His family, consisted of himself and squaw, four sons, and one daughter. His natural enmity to the white man; his desperately bold and revengeful disposition; his hatred of his enemies, even of his own race; his matchless success on the war-path, won for him honor from his people, distinguished him as a hero, and made him a leader of his race.

By the whites — especially those who have escaped the scenes of his brutal carnage, to wear, within, the garb of deepest mourning, from the severing of social, parental and filial ties — Inkpaduta will ever be remembered as a savage monster in human shape, fitted only for the darkest corner in Hades. . . .

In the autumn of 1856, Inkpaduta's band went down to the lower valley of the Little Sioux, where the first trouble with the whites began in the vicinity of Smithland. Several aggressions by the Indians and violent repulses by the whites are given, as preceding the incidents, generally accepted by both Indians and whites, as the immediate cause of the fatal catastrophe.

It seems, that one day, while the Indians were in pursuit of elk, they had some difficulty with the settlers. The Indians claimed that the whites intercepted the chase. There is also a report that an Indian was bitten by a dog belonging to one of the settlers; that the Indian killed the dog; and that the man gave the Indian a severe beating. It is also said that the settlers whipped off a company of

squaws, who were carrying off their hay and corn. The Indians becoming more and more insolent, the settlers, in self-protection, went to the camp and disarmed them, intending to return their guns the next day and escort them out of the country; but the next morning not a "redskin" was to be seen, they had folded their tents, "like the Arabs," and as silently stolen away. They went up the Little Sioux, their hearts filled with revenge, and committed depredations as they went. At first they pretended to be friendly, but soon commenced depredations, forcibly taking guns, ammunition, provisions, and whatever they wanted. They also amused themselves by discharging their guns through articles of furniture, ripping open feather beds and scattering their contents through the yards. The farther they proceeded, the fewer and more defenseless the settlers were; and the bolder and more insolent the Indians became. After remaining a few days in Cherokee county, where they busied themselves with wantonly shooting cattle, hogs, and fowls, and destroying property generally; sometimes severely beating those who resisted, they proceeded up the Little Sioux, to the little settlement in Clay county, now called Peterson. Here they tarried two or three days, committing acts of atrocity as usual. . . .

Inkpaduta and his band reached the vicinity of Lake Okoboji on the evening of March 7th. The settlers had no knowledge of the presence of the embittered Sioux. Harvey Luce had reached home from his trip to Waterloo and Rowland Gardner had begun preparations for a trip to Fort Dodge for provisions on the morning of March 8.

As we were about to surround the table for breakfast, a solitary Indian entered the house, wearing the guise of

friendship and claiming the sacred prerogative of hospitality. A place was promptly prepared for him at the table, and he partook of the frugal meal with the family. This one was soon followed by others, until Inkpaduta and his fourteen warriors, with their squaws and papooses, had entered the house. They dissembled friendship, and the scanty store of the household was freely divided among them, until each was satisfied. They then became suddenly sullen, insolent, and overbearing, demanding ammunition and numerous other things. When father was giving one of them a few gun-caps, he snatched the whole box from his hand. At the same time another — as if by agreement — tried to get a powder-horn hanging against the wall; but was prevented by Mr. Luce, who now suspected that their intention was to get the ammunition, that we might not be able to defend ourselves. The Indian then drew his gun, and would have shot Mr. Luce, had the latter not promptly seized the gun pointed at his head.

About 9 a. m. Dr. Harriott and Mr. Snyder arrived with letters for Mr. Gardner to mail at Ft. Dodge. Rowland Gardner told them of the belligerent attitude of Inkpaduta and his band, who were still loitering in and around the cabin. Unfortunately, both Dr. Harriott and Mr. Snyder felt there was no danger, traded with them, and then returned to their own cabin, taking no precautions for their own safety. The Indians prowled around the Gardner cabin until noon when they left for the Mattock cabin, driving the Gardner cattle before them and shooting them on the way.

By this time stark terror reigned in the Gardner

cabin. All agreed the other settlers should be warned, but it was not until 2 p. m. that Harvey Luce and Mr. Clark set out. With prophetic sorrow, Mrs. Luce cried out: "Oh, Harvey! I am afraid you will never come back to me!" It proved to be their last parting.

About three o'clock the Gardners heard the report of guns in rapid succession from the Mattock cabin. As Abbie Gardner relates:

> We were, then, no longer in doubt as to the awful reality that was hanging over us. Two long hours we passed in this fearful anxiety and suspense, waiting and watching, with conflicting hopes and fears, for Mr. Luce and Mr. Clark to return. At length, just as the sun was sinking behind the western horizon, shedding its brilliant rays over the snowy landscape, father, whose anxiety would no longer allow him to remain within doors, went out to reconnoiter. He, however, hastily returned, saying: "Nine Indians are coming, now only a short distance from the house, and we are all doomed to die." His first thought was to barricade the door and fight till the last, saying: "While they are killing all of us, I will kill a few of them, with the two loaded guns still left in the house." But to this mother protested, having not yet lost all faith in the savage monsters, and still hoping they would appreciate our kindness and spare our lives, she said: "If we have to die, let us die innocent of shedding blood."

Massacre at the Gardner Cabin

Alas, for the faith placed in these inhuman monsters! They entered the house and demanded more flour; and, as father turned to get them what remained of our scanty store, they shot him through the heart; he fell upon his right side and died without a struggle. When first the

Indian raised his gun to fire, mother or Mrs. Luce seized the gun and drew it down; but the other Indians instantly turned upon them, seized them by their arms, and beat them over the head with the butts of their guns; then dragged them out of doors, and killed them in the most cruel and shocking manner.

They then began an indiscriminate destruction of everything in the house; breaking open trunks and taking out clothing, cutting open feather-beds, and scattering the feathers everywhere. When the Indians entered the house, and during these awful scenes, I was seated in a chair, holding my sister's baby in my arms; her little boy on one side, and my little brother on the other, clinging to me in terror. They next seized the children; tearing them from me one by one, while they reached their little arms to me, crying piteously for protection that I was powerless to give. Heedless of their cries, they dragged them out of doors, and beat them to death with sticks of stove-wood.

All this time I was both speechless and tearless; but, now left alone, I begged them to kill me. It seemed as though I could not wait for them to finish their work of death. One of them approached, and roughly seizing me by the arm said something I could not understand, but I well knew, from their actions, that I was to be a captive. All the terrible tortures and indignities I had ever read or heard of being inflicted upon their captives now arose in horrid vividness before me.

After ransacking the house, and taking whatever they thought might be serviceable, such as provisions, bedding, arms and ammunition; and after the bloody scalping knife had done its terrible work; I was dragged from the never-to-be-forgotten scene. No language can ever suggest, much less adequately portray, my feelings as I passed that door. . . . Behind me I left my heroic father, murdered in a cowardly manner, in the very act of extreme hospi-

tality . . . outside the door lay the three children — so dear to me — bruised, mangled, and bleeding; while their moans and groans pierced my ears, and called in vain for one loving caress which I was prevented from giving them. A little farther on lay my Christ-like mother, who till the very last had pleaded the cause of her brutish murderers, literally weltering in her own blood. Still farther on, at the southwest corner of the house, in a similar condition, lay my eldest sister, Mrs. Luce, who had been so intimately associated with me from earliest recollections. . . . Filled with loathing for these wretches whose hands were still wet with the blood of those dearest to me, and at one of whose belts still hung the dripping scalp of my mother; with even the much coveted boon of death denied me, we plunged into the gloom of the forest, and the coming night; but neither the gloom of the forest, nor the blackness of the night, or both combined, could begin to symbolize the darkness of my terror-stricken heart.

Massacre at the Mattock Cabin

Terrible as were the scenes through which I had just passed, others, if possible even yet more horrible, awaited me. A tramp of about one mile brought me to the camp of my captors, which was the home of Mr. Mattock. Here the sights and sounds that met the eye and ear were truly appalling. The forest was lighted by the camp-fires, and also by the burning of the cabins; and the air was rent with the unearthly war-whoop of the savages, and the shrieks and groans of two helpless victims, confined in the burning cabin, suffering all the agonies of a fiery death. Scattered upon the ground was a number of bodies, among which I recognized that of Dr. Harriott, rifle still in hand; as well as the bodies of Mr. Mattock, Mr. Snyder, and others, with rifles near them, some broken. All gave evidence that an attempt at resistance had been made.

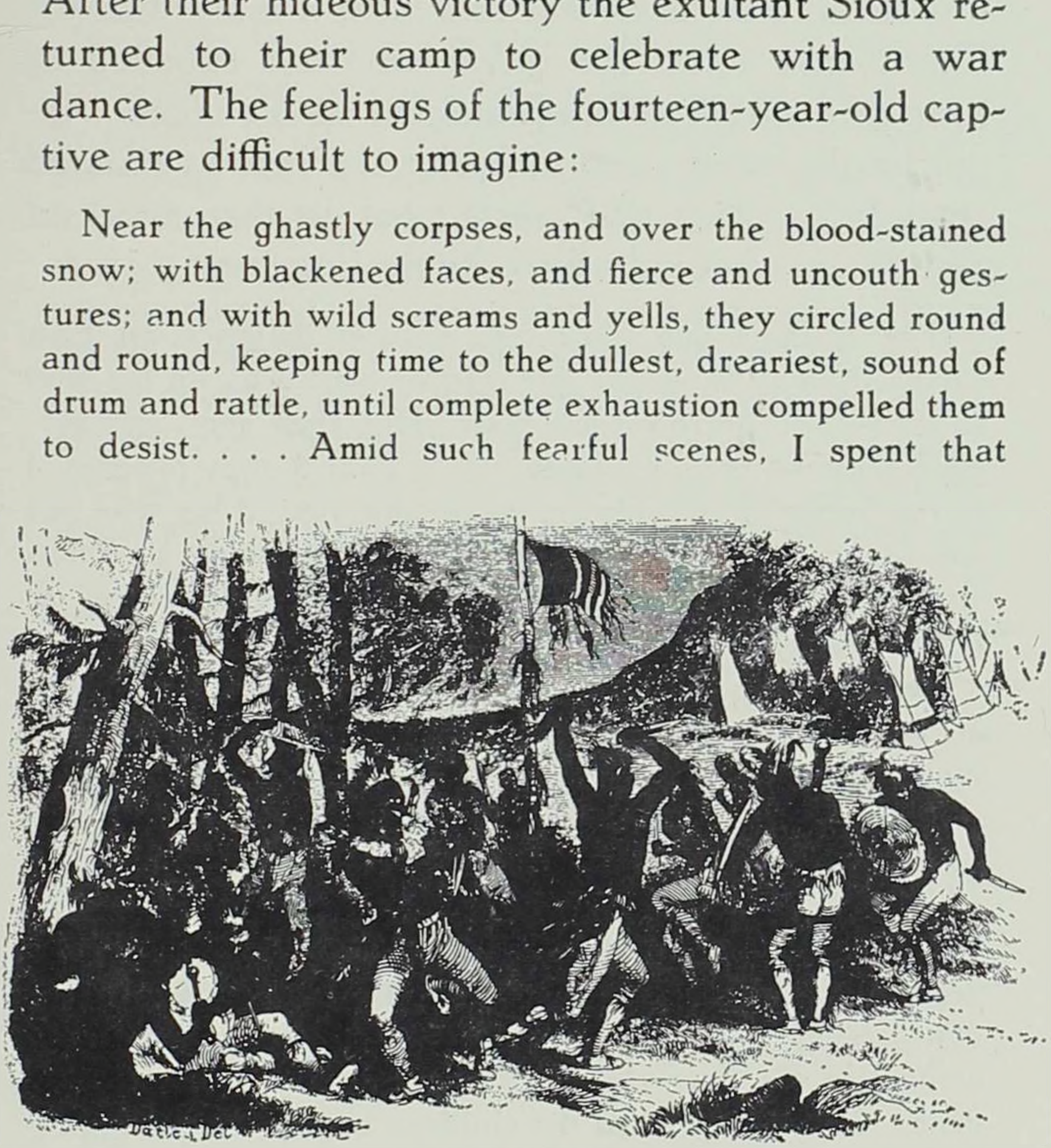
Burning of the Mattock Cabin
The air was rent with the unearthly war-whoop of the savages.

Carl Granger Decapitated

Dr. Harriott and Mr. Snyder, it seemed, had come across the strait from their home, to assist their neighbors. In all this affray not an Indian was killed, and only one wounded; but this one quite badly, and by Dr. Harriott, as the Indians told me. Here had perished five men, two women, and four children; and the bodies, save the two in the burning cabin, lay about the camp, their ghastly features clearly revealed by the light of the burning building; presenting a frightful scene beyond the power of my feeble pen to describe. Carl Granger's remains lay beside the Granger cabin. He had been first shot, and then his head chopped off above his mouth and ears, supposed to have been done with a broad-ax, found on the premises. Wm. Granger escaped the fate of his brother, being at home, at Red Wing, with his family.

The bodies of Harvey Luce and Mr. Clark were found near the outlet on the southern shore of East Okoboji. They apparently had been ambushed while attempting to reach the Howe and Thatcher cabins. The two men brought to twenty the number of victims massacred on March 8. After their hideous victory the exultant Sioux returned to their camp to celebrate with a war dance. The feelings of the fourteen-year-old captive are difficult to imagine:

> Near the ghastly corpses, and over the blood-stained snow; with blackened faces, and fierce and uncouth gestures; and with wild screams and yells, they circled round and round, keeping time to the dullest, dreariest, sound of drum and rattle, until complete exhaustion compelled them to desist. . . . Amid such fearful scenes, I spent that



Sioux War Dance
With wild screams and yells, they circled round and round.

long, long, sleepless night — the first of my captivity, and the thoughts that fired my brain and oppressed my heart, can never be imagined, except by those who have suffered like pangs, and had them burned into their souls by a like experience.

The Howe Cabin

Morning came at last and with it more horrors. The Sioux thirst for blood was not satisfied as long as a single family remained on the lakes. Accordingly, early next morning the braves painted their faces black and started out on their work of slaughter. According to Abbie Gardner:

> The Indians had gone but a short distance on East Okoboji when they met Mr. Howe, who was on his way to father's to borrow some flour. Him they shot, and severed his head from his body. . . . Thence they proceeded to the house of Mr. Howe, where they found his wife, his son Jonathan, his daughter Sardis, a young lady, and four younger children. They left only lifeless bodies, here, to tell the story of their bloody work.
>
> From here they went to the cabin of Noble and Thatcher, where were two men and two women — Mr. and Mrs. Noble, Mr. Ryan, and Mrs. Thatcher, besides two children. With their usual cowardice and hypocrisy, the Indians feigned friendship until they had secured every advantage, so their own heads would be in no danger. Then, by concert of action, the two men were simultaneously shot. Ryan fell dead instantly. Mr. Noble cried, "O, I am killed!" After the fatal bullet struck him, he walked to the door though bleeding freely, and then fell dead. They next seized the children by the feet, dragging them from their mother's arms out of doors, and dashed their brains out against an oak tree which stood near the

house. They then plundered the house, appropriating to themselves whatever they wanted. After slaughtering the cattle, hogs, and poultry, they took the two women — Mrs. Noble and Mrs. Thatcher — captives and started back to their camp. On their way they again stopped at the house of Mr. Howe. Here a terrible spectacle met the gaze of the captives. Mrs. Noble found her mother lying dead under the bed, where she had doubtless crawled after being left by her brutal murderers. Her head was terribly beaten, probably with a flat-iron, as one lay near by bearing traces of the murderous work. Her eyes were protruding from the sockets, and, as Mrs. Noble described them, "looked like balls of fire." Her brother Jacob, some thirteen years old, who had been left for dead or dying, was found sitting up in the yard, and conscious, although unable to speak. To her questions he responded only with a nod or shake of the head. She told him, if the Indians did not come to him and finish the murder, to crawl into the house and get into one of the beds, and perhaps help would come and he might be saved; but the savages made sure of their work before they left, killing him before her eyes. The rest of the family lay scattered about the house and yard, all more or less mutilated.

After plundering and destroying the cabins, the Sioux returned to their camp with their captives and booty. Abbie Gardner was allowed to visit with the other two captives in order to allow the women a chance to recount their losses. Then they were taken to separate lodges and forced to braid their hair and paint their faces in the manner of squaws.

Oh, how I longed for death; and whenever they thought to torture me by threatening to take my life, I

would merely bow my head. My tearless acquiescence and willingness to die seemed to fill them with wonder, and even admiration, as they thought it a sign of great bravery, a quality they highly appreciate but which they did not suppose the white woman to possess. Soon after my capture, one of the warriors, who was sitting by me one day in the tent, thinking to test my courage or to be amused at my fears, took his revolver from his belt and began loading it, while he gave me to understand that he would kill me as soon as it was loaded. I merely bowed my head to signify that I was ready. When the revolver was all loaded he drew back the hammer and pointed it close to my head, but again I quietly bowed my head expecting he would do as he said; but instead of that he lowered the weapon, and looked at me as though astonished, and then laughed at me uproariously. So amused was he, indeed, that when others came into the *tepee* he would tell them the story, by signs and gestures, of how I had acted. Nor did it stop here, but for days after I could see that it was a favorite topic of conversation among them, and never again, except once by a squaw, was a weapon drawn upon me while I was a captive.

On March 10 the Sioux broke camp and crossed West Okoboji on the ice. The next day, at an early hour, they moved in a northerly direction to the west side of Spirit Lake. On March 13 they accidentally discovered the log cabin of William Marble. The Marbles were entirely unaware of the tragedy that had occurred on the Okobojis. It was therefore not difficult for the Sioux to completely disarm the Marbles of any suspicion.

Feigning friendship, they readily gained admission to the house; when, as usual, they asked for food. After

satisfying their hunger, they bantered him to trade rifles. After the trade was made, they proposed to shoot at a mark. A board was set up, and after firing several shots it was knocked down. Mr. Marble's gun being empty, they requested him to set it up. As soon as his back was turned, they shot him through the back, and he fell dead in his tracks. Mrs. Marble was sitting at the window, with palpitating heart, watching their actions; and as soon as she saw her husband start to replace the board, as if by instinct, she divined their murderous intentions. Seeing him fall, she rushed for the door, and would have fled for her life; but was quickly overtaken and conveyed to the camp. Thus, another unfortunate victim was added to our little band of helpless captives. We were all brought together in the same *tepee*; for what savage purpose we were at loss to know; unless it was that we might communicate to each other all their deeds of blood and plunder; for of these they were exceedingly proud, never losing an opportunity to recount them and glory in them. They carried away what they wanted from Mr. Marble's place, and destroyed what they could.

Another war dance followed the Sioux murder of Mr. Marble, the only white person killed on Spirit Lake, compared with thirty-seven lives snuffed out on the Okobojis. Notwithstanding this fact, the tragic event has always been called the Spirit Lake Massacre because at the time the whole lake region was known abroad as Spirit Lake, from the Indian word 'Minne-Waukon," signifying spirit water.

WILLIAM J. PETERSEN

Captives of the Sioux

The four women who were made captive by the Sioux during the Spirit Lake Massacre underwent incredibly horrible experiences. Immediately after they left the Lakes, Abbie Gardner commenced worrying about her only living sister, 16-year-old Eliza M., who had left the Gardner cabin before the massacre to assist a pioneer family in Springfield, Minnesota.

When we encamped at Heron Lake, fifteen miles from Springfield, on the 26th of March, the warriors painted themselves in their most fierce and hideous fashion, and rifle in hand and scalping knife in belt, again sallied forth on the warpath, leaving us captives in charge of one of the warriors and the squaws. Before leaving they took special pains to communicate to us by signs and gesture, and their jargon, the terrible work they meant to do. Knowing, as I did, that my sister was among their intended victims, and thinking that she would either be killed, or share with me what I felt to be a worse fate — that of a captive — the anxiety I felt for her, and the rest of the people at Springfield, baffles description; but I could only await in suspense for their return. . . .

After an absence of two days, the warriors who had gone to the attack on Springfield returned to our camp, bringing in their plunder. They had twelve horses, heavily laden with dry goods, groceries, powder, lead, bedquilts, wearing apparel, provisions, etc. They gave us to

understand that they had met with a repulse; but to what extent we could only conjecture. They told us they had killed only one woman. Whether that was my sister or not, I could not tell.

Among this plunder were several bolts of calico and red flannel. Of these, especially the flannel, they were exceedingly proud; decorating themselves with it in fantastic fashion. Red leggings, red shirts, red blankets, and red in every conceivable way, was the style there, as long as it lasted. Could anything have amused me in those sad days, it would have been to see their grotesque attempts to wear the habiliments of the whites; especially the attempts of the squaws to wear the tight-fitting garments of the white women. They would put in one arm and then reach back and try to get in the other; but, even if they succeeded in getting both arms into the sleeves at the same time, they were too broad-shouldered, and brawny, to get the waist into position, or to fasten it; so after struggling awhile they would give up in disgust. They were altogether too much the shape of a barrel to wear the dresses of white women. So they cut off and threw away the waists, and made the skirts loose fitting sacks after the squaw fashion. All this amused them greatly; they would laugh and chatter like a lot of monkeys. . . .

Early on the morning after the warriors returned from Springfield, the Indians started for the unbroken northwestern wilderness. The squaws and prisoners were loaded with seventy and more pounds of camp equipment, food, and plunder, while the braves strode ahead unencumbered. These hardships proved too much for Mrs. Thatcher whose babe had been torn from her bosom and killed.

Taking cold, as she inevitably must, she was thrown into phlebitis fever and a combination of ills, resulting in the most excruciating suffering. One breast gathered and broke, and one limb, being swollen to nearly twice its natural size, turned black, even to her body, and the veins were bursted by the pressure. No woman in like condition at home would think of being out of bed . . . but she, poor woman, was compelled not only to tramp through the snow and wade through ice-cold water, waist-deep, but even to chop and carry wood at night. . . .

Although the fear of pursuit had subsided still we journeyed westward, knowing no rest. Frequently breaking the ice with the horses, the Indians waded through, and we followed, where the water was waist-deep. Then, with clothing wet and frozen, we tramped on through wind and storm, lying down at night in the same clothing in which we had forded the streams. Often we went without food for two or three days at a time, and when we did get any it was the poorest and most unpalatable. The Indians themselves were never entirely without food long at a time; but we captives got only what they did not care for. No hay was carried, and no grass could yet be found, so the poor horses fared if possible, worse than we. From time to time, one of them would die of starvation; and then the Indians had meat. But as the horses died our burdens were increased. Such things as they could not put upon the backs of the already overburdened squaws and captives, they buried; marking the place by blazing trees, by boulders, and by streams, etc.

Our journey led through the famous pipestone quarry, in Pipestone county, Minnesota. It is situated on a small tributary of the Big Sioux, called Pipestone creek. . . . Our captors rested themselves here for about one day, in which time they were engaged in the delightful task of gathering the pipestone and shaping it into pipes, which

were formed in the manner foretold ages ago. . . . After six weeks of incessant marching over the trackless prairie, and through the deep snow, across creeks, sloughs, rivers and lakes, we reached the Big Sioux (at about the point where now stands the town of Flandrau). Most of the journey had been performed in cold and inclement weather, but now spring seemed to have come. . . .

The Big Sioux posed a problem in crossing which happily for the Indians was solved by giant trees which had been undermined by the current and fallen across the river at various points. Piles of driftwood collected against these trees, forming a fairly good albeit precarious bridge.

On such a bridge, we were to cross the now swollen waters. Mrs. Thatcher, whose painful illness and terrible sufferings have been alluded to, had now partially recovered, and was compelled to carry her pack as before. During the six weeks of her captivity, with fortitude heroic and patience surprising, through slush, snow, and ice-cold water; through famine and fatigue, and forced marches; with physical ills that language cannot adequately portray; and with heart wounds yet deeper, she had been upborne by the hope of yet being restored to her husband and relations. . . . As we were about to follow the Indians across one of these uncertain bridges, where a single misstep might plunge us into the deep waters, an Indian, not more than sixteen years old, the same who snatched the box of caps from my father, and who had always manifested a great degree of hatred and contempt for the whites, approached us, and taking the pack from Mrs. Thatcher's shoulders and placing it on his own, ordered us forward. This seeming kindness at once aroused our suspicions, as no assistance had ever been offered to any

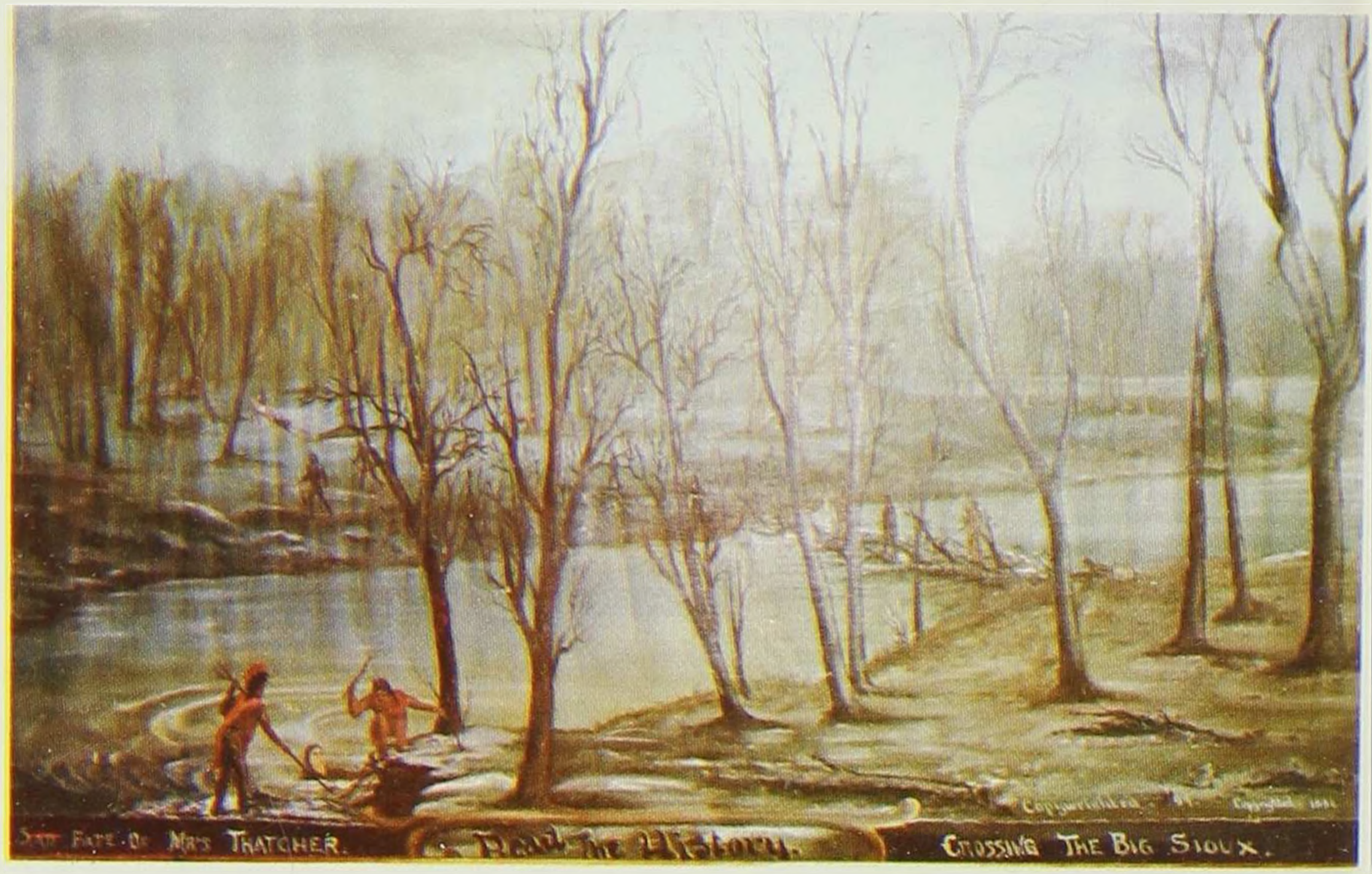
of us, under any circumstances whatever. Mrs. Thatcher, being confident that her time had come to die, hastily bade me good-bye, and said, "If you are so fortunate as to escape, tell my dear husband and parents that I desired to live and escape for their sakes." (It will be remembered that Mr. Thatcher was away from home at the time of the massacre.) When we reached the center of the swollen stream, as we anticipated, this insolent young savage pushed Mrs. Thatcher from the bridge into the ice-cold water, but by what seemed super-natural strength she breasted the dreadful torrent, and making a last struggle for life reached the shore which had just been left, and

The Cruel Death of Mrs. Thatcher
With long poles shoved her back into the angry stream.

MASSACRE AT THE MATTOCK CABIN

Terrible as were the scenes through which I had just passed, others, if possible even yet more horrible, awaited me. A tramp of about one mile brought me to the camp of my captors, which was the home of Mr. Mattock. Here the sights and sounds that met the eye and ear were truly appalling. The forest was lighted by the camp-fires, and also by the burning of the cabins; and the air was rent with the unearthly war-whoop of the savages, and the shrieks and groans of two helpless victims, confined in the burning cabin, suffering all the agonies of a fiery death. Scattered upon the ground was a number of bodies, among which I recognized that of Dr. Harriott, rifle still in hand; as well as the bodies of Mr. Mattock, Mr. Snyder, and others, with rifles near them, some broken. All gave evidence that an attempt at resistance had been made.

Dr. Harriott and Mr. Snyder, it seemed, had come across the strait from their home, to assist their neighbors. In all this affray not an Indian was killed, and only one wounded; but this one quite badly, and by Dr. Harriott, as the Indians told me. Here had perished five men, two women, and four children; and the bodies, save the two in the burning cabin, lay about the camp, their ghastly features clearly revealed by the light of the burning building; presenting a frightful scene beyond the power of my feeble pen to describe. Carl Granger's remains lay beside the Granger cabin. He had been first shot, and then his head chopped off above his mouth and ears, supposed to have been done with a broad-ax, found on the premises. From Abbie Gardner Sharp's *History of the Spirit Lake Massacre.*



THE CRUEL DEATH OF MRS. THATCHER

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When we reached the center of the swollen stream [Big Sioux], as we anticipated, this insolent young savage pushed Mrs. Thatcher from the bridge into the ice-cold water, but by what seemed super-natural strength she breasted the dreadful torrent, and making a last struggle for life reached the shore which had just been left, and was clinging to the root of a tree, at the bank. She was here met by some of the other Indians, who were just coming upon the scene; they commenced throwing clubs at her, and with long poles shoved her back into the angry stream. As if nerved by fear, or dread of such a death, she made another desperate effort for life, and doubtless would have gained the opposite shore; but here again she was met by her merciless tormentors, and was beaten off as before. She was then carried down by the furious, boiling current of the Sioux; while the Indians on the other side of the stream were running along the banks, whooping and yelling, and throwing sticks and stones at her, until she reached another bridge. Here she was finally shot by one of the Indians in another division of the band, who was crossing with the two other captives, some distance below . . . From Abbie Gardner Sharp's *History of the Spirit Lake Massacre.*

COUNCIL HELD TO RANSOM ABBIE GARDNER

No attempt was made by them to communicate with me, and I was left in doubt as to the object of their visit. I at once discovered, however, that there was some unusual commotion among them, and was not long in divining that it was concerning me. Councils were held after the usual fashion of the Indians. First they gathered in and around the teepee where I was; and then, they adjourned to the open prairie, where they sat in a circle and talked and smoked and smoked and talked. . . .

All this parley and these repeated councils, I subsequently learned, were occasioned by the fact that the council was divided. The head Yankton chief seems to have been something of a "granger," and disposed to ignore middle-men. He therefore proposed that they should themselves take me to the military station on the Missouri river, claiming that they would get more for my ransom than these Yellow Medicine men were able to pay; that is, more tobacco and powder. At last, however, his consent was obtained, somewhat as the votes of pale-faced legislators have often been. A present was made to him, and then all "went merry as a marriage bell."

The price paid for my ransom was two horses, twelve blankets, two kegs of powder, twenty pounds of tobacco, thirty-two yards of blue squaw cloth, thirty-seven and a half yards of calico and ribbon, and other small articles, with which these Indians had been provided by Major Flandrau. From Abbie Gardner Sharp's *History of the Spirit Lake Massacre.*

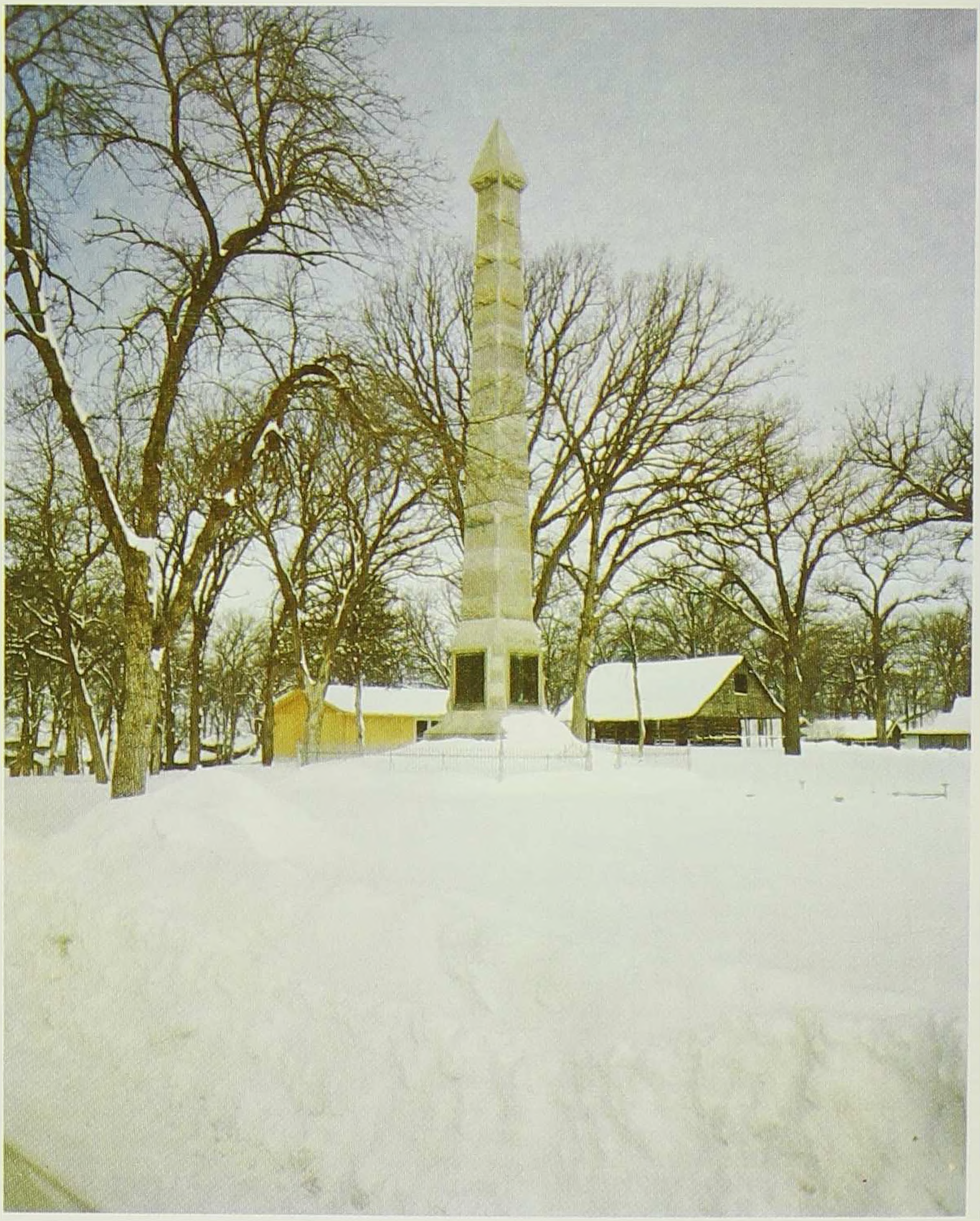

Photo by Vinton Arnold

The Gardner Cabin and newly-built Museum after a heavy snowfall in March, 1962. It was during just such a severe winter that the Spirit Lake Massacre occurred in March, 1857.

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The tragic death of Mrs. Thatcher left only three captives, each of whom could readily envision a similar fate from their relentless foes. All these women were young and prior to their capture had looked forward to a long and happy life. Mrs. Noble was particularly bereaved because she was a cousin of Mrs. Thatcher and had lived with her for many years.

While making this journey, we had frequently met roving parties of Indians, from the various bands of Sioux, who always seemed to be "Hail fellows well met," with our captors. It has been claimed by the Sioux generally, that Inkpaduta and his band were "bad Indians," and disfellowshipped by them. But I surely saw nothing of the kind while I was among them. Whenever we met any of the other bands, our captors would go over the story of their achievements, by word, gesture, and the display of

scalps and booty, giving a vivid description of the affair; reproducing in fullest detail even the groans and sighs of their victims. To all this the other Sioux listened, not only without any signs of disapprobation, but with every indication of enjoyment and high appreciation. . . .

On the sixth of May, as we were encamped some thirty miles west of the Big Sioux and near a small lake, known to the Indians as Chau-pta-ya-ton-ka, or Skunk lake, we were visited by two Sioux brothers, by the name of Makpe-ya-ha-ho-ton and Se-ha-ho-ta, from the reservation on Yellow Medicine river, Minn. They remained over night, enjoying the hospitality of Inkpaduta; and were especially entertained by a pantomimic representation of the march through, and *heroic* deeds done in Iowa and Minnesota. After the entertainment was over, the visitors proposed to purchase me, but were informed that I was not for sale. Perhaps they might have bought Mrs. Noble, but in some way got the impression that she was German; and, as is well known, the Sioux have a prejudice against the Teutons. So Mrs. Marble was the favored one, for whom they paid, as they claimed, all they had — all their trading stock. . . .

Before leaving her two friends, Mrs. Marble explained how she had been purchased and expressed confidence that she would be returned to her people. If so, she promised to do everything in her power to rescue Abbie and Mrs. Noble. Mrs. Marble was brought safely to civilization; remarried and spent the remaining years of her life in California.

It was perhaps three weeks after our capture, when our own clothing actually became worn out, and we were compelled to adopt the costume of the squaws, a style of dress

having, at least, one thing in its favor, it was better adopted to our mode of life than that of the civilized nations. . . .

As before stated, we from time to time met with strange bands of Sioux, of the various subordinate tribes. Hence, in about four weeks after the departure of Mrs. Marble, we fell in with a small party of Yanktons. One of them by name Wanduskaihanke, or End-of-the-snake, purchased Mrs. Noble and myself. What he paid I never knew. His motive was to make money by selling us to the whites. Unfortunately our purchaser did not take an immediate departure, as did the purchaser of Mrs. Marble, but continued to journey with Inkpaduta. Now, for the first time since our captivity, Mrs. Noble and I were allowed to lodge in the same tepee. Our owner treated us about the same as our former masters, and we were required to trudge along and carry a pack as before. Our master was a one-legged Indian, and having no artificial limb he hobbled about on a crutch. It might be well said, he lived on his horse. He went hunting mounted, and his squaw, or one of us captives, had to follow after him and pick up the game. I have followed after him many a weary mile for this purpose. If any game was shot in the water, his dog, being trained for that purpose, would bring it out to the shore, where I would take it and carry it on.

One evening, a few days after we were sold, just as we supposed we were settled for the night, and as Mrs. Noble and I were about to lie down to rest, a son of Inkpaduta, of the name of Makpeahotoman, or Roaring Cloud, came into the tent of the Yankton, and ordered Mrs. Noble out. She shook her head and refused to go. I told her she had better, as I feared he would kill her if she did not. But she still refused. Mrs. Noble was the only one of us who ever dared to refuse obedience to our masters. Naturally of an independent nature, and conscious of her superiority

to her masters in everything except brute force, it was hard for her to submit to their arbitrary and inhuman mandates. Frequently before, she had refused obedience, but in the end was always compelled to submit. All the reward she got for her show of independence was heavier burdens by the way, and a bloody death at last.

No sooner did she positively refuse to comply with Roaring Cloud's demand. than, seizing her by the arm with one hand, and a great stick of wood, she had a little while before brought in for fuel, in the other, he dragged her from the tent. When I saw this I well knew what would follow. It would have been madness, and in vain, for me to interfere; the Yankton did not, except by words. I could only listen in silence to the cruel blows and groans, as the sounds came into the tent; expecting he would return to serve me in the same manner. He struck her three blows, such as only an Indian can deal, when, concluding he had finished her, he came into the tent, washed his bloody hands, had a few high words with the Yankton, and lay down to sleep.

The piteous groans from my murdered companion continued for half an hour or so — deep, sorrowful, and terrible; then all was silent. No one went out to administer relief or sympathy, or even out of curiosity. She was left to die alone, within a few feet of those she had faithfully served, and of one by whom she was tenderly loved. Gladly would I have gone to her side, but was perfectly paralyzed, and terror-stricken with the sights and sounds around me. I evidently would not have been permitted to leave the tent, and any attempt to do so would, doubtless, have brought on my defenseless head a like thunderbolt. Mrs. Noble was about twenty years of age, rather tall and slender though of good form and graceful in her manners. She was a member of the Disciples church, and during the

dark days of captivity I have frequently heard her sing gospel hymns of praise of Him who rules the universe. . . .

The next morning the warriors gathered around the already mangled corpse, and amused themselves by making it a target to shoot at. To this show of barbarism I was brought out and compelled to stand a silent witness. Faint and sick at heart, I at length turned away from the dreadful sight, without their orders to do so, and started off on

Death of Mrs. Noble at Hands of Roaring Cloud
He struck her three blows, such as only an Indian can deal.

the day's march, expecting they would riddle me with their bullets; for why should I escape more than the others? But for some unaccountable reason I was spared. After going a short distance I looked back, and they were still around her using their knives cutting off her hair, and mutilating her body.

All this time the whole camp was in confusion. The squaws were dragging down the tent-poles, wrapping the canvas into bundles, packing the cooking utensils, and loading up the dogs. At last the bloody camp was deserted, and the mangled body left lying upon the ground unburied. Her hair — in two heavy braids, just as she had arranged it — was tied to the end of a stick, perhaps three feet long, and during the day, as I wearily and sadly toiled on, one of the young Indians walked by my side and repeatedly slashed me in the face with it; thus adding insult to injury, and wounding my heart even more than my face. Such was the sympathy a lonely, broken-hearted girl got at the hands of the "noble red man." . . .

If Mrs. Noble could only have escaped the vengeance of Roaring Cloud a few days longer, she doubtless would have been set at liberty and restored to civilized society and the companionship of her sister and two brothers. These were living at this time in Hampton, Iowa. Could she only have known the efforts being made for her rescue, and how near they already were to success, she would have had courage to endure insults a little longer and hope to bid her look forward. At the very moment when she was dragged from her tent and brutally murdered, rescuers under the direction of the United States commissioner, fully prepared for her ransom, were pressing forward with all the dispatch possible.

It was only a few days after her death that we reached the banks of the James river, where now is situated the town of Old Ashton, in Spink county, D[akota] T[erritory]. Here was an encampment of one hundred and ninety lodges of Yanktons, a powerful branch of the Sioux nation. I counted the lodges and would have been glad to count the Indians had that been practicable. . . .

The arrival of a white woman in their midst

proved a sensation to the Yanktons and a steady stream of Indians came to Abbie's tent to see her fair skin and exclaim over it. Despite her unhappy situation Abbie could not help being amused at the opportunity afforded her owner to gain wealth through his unique exhibition. On the serious side she worried about the future as the lone white captive of the Sioux. She had no powerful friends to seek her release and during her captivity she could not be sure she had a living relative, since she did not know whether her sister was dead or alive.

Of all the living things taken in Iowa and Minnesota, Dr. Harriott's pony and myself were all that remained. Of the seventeen horses taken, all save this one had succumbed to the severity of the journey and the cruelty of their masters. The horses had starved to death, or died from exhaustion, and been eaten by the Indians before grass had come, and while game was scarce. . . .

The morning of May 30th dawned as fair and lovely as any mortal eye has ever seen. . . . While the Yanktons, as usual, were crowding our tent to see the "white squaw," there came into the tent three Indians dressed in coats and white shirts, with starched bosoms. Coming into the camp of the Yanktons, who were without a single shred of white man's make, these coats and shirts would naturally attract attention and excite wonder. To me the interest was deep and thrilling. I knew at once that they were from the borders of civilization; whether I should ever reach there or not; but it was some comfort even to see an Indian clothed in the habiliments of the whites.

No attempt was made by them to communicate with me, and I was left in doubt as to the object of their visit. I at

once discovered, however, that there was some unusual commotion among them, and was not long in divining that it was concerning me. Councils were held after the usual fashion of the Indians. First they gathered in and around the tepee where I was; and then, they adjourned to the open prairie, where they sat in a circle and talked and smoked and smoked and talked. . . .

All this parley and these repeated councils, I subsequently learned, were occasioned by the fact that the council was divided. The head Yankton chief seems to have been something of a "granger," and disposed to ignore middle-men. He therefore proposed that they should themselves take me to the military station on the Missouri river, claiming that they would get more for my ransom than these Yellow Medicine men were able to pay; that is, more tobacco and powder. At last, however, his consent was obtained, somewhat as the votes of pale-faced legistors have often been. A present was made to him, and then all "went merry as a marriage bell."

The price paid for my ransom was two horses, twelve blankets, two kegs of powder, twenty pounds of tobacco, thirty-two yards of blue squaw cloth, thirty-seven and a half yards of calico and ribbon, and other small articles, with which these Indians had been provided by Major Flandrau.

The bargain having been agreed to and the price paid, I was at once turned over into the hands of my new purchasers. But so great a business transaction as this must be sealed and celebrated by nothing less than a dog-feast. Of all the feasts known to the Indians, a dog feast is the greatest and the giving of such a feast to me and my purchasers was the highest honor they could have conferred upon us. . . .

This was my last night with the Yanktons; one never to be forgotten. I was still in uncertainty, but felt thankful

to get rid of those from whom I had suffered so much, and who had murdered so many dear to me. . . .

The Indians who negotiated the ransom of Abbie Gardner lost no time in departing from the Yankton village. Two Yankton warriors escorted them lest Inkpaduta or some members of his band

Return of Abbie Gardner with Her Ransomers
Abbie was installed as driver of the wagon.

should waylay and kill their former captive. Abbie was drawn across the James River in a bullboat. Once safe across, her liberators produced a wagon and span of horses which had been carefully hidden during the negotiations lest the Yanktons demand them as a part of the ransom.

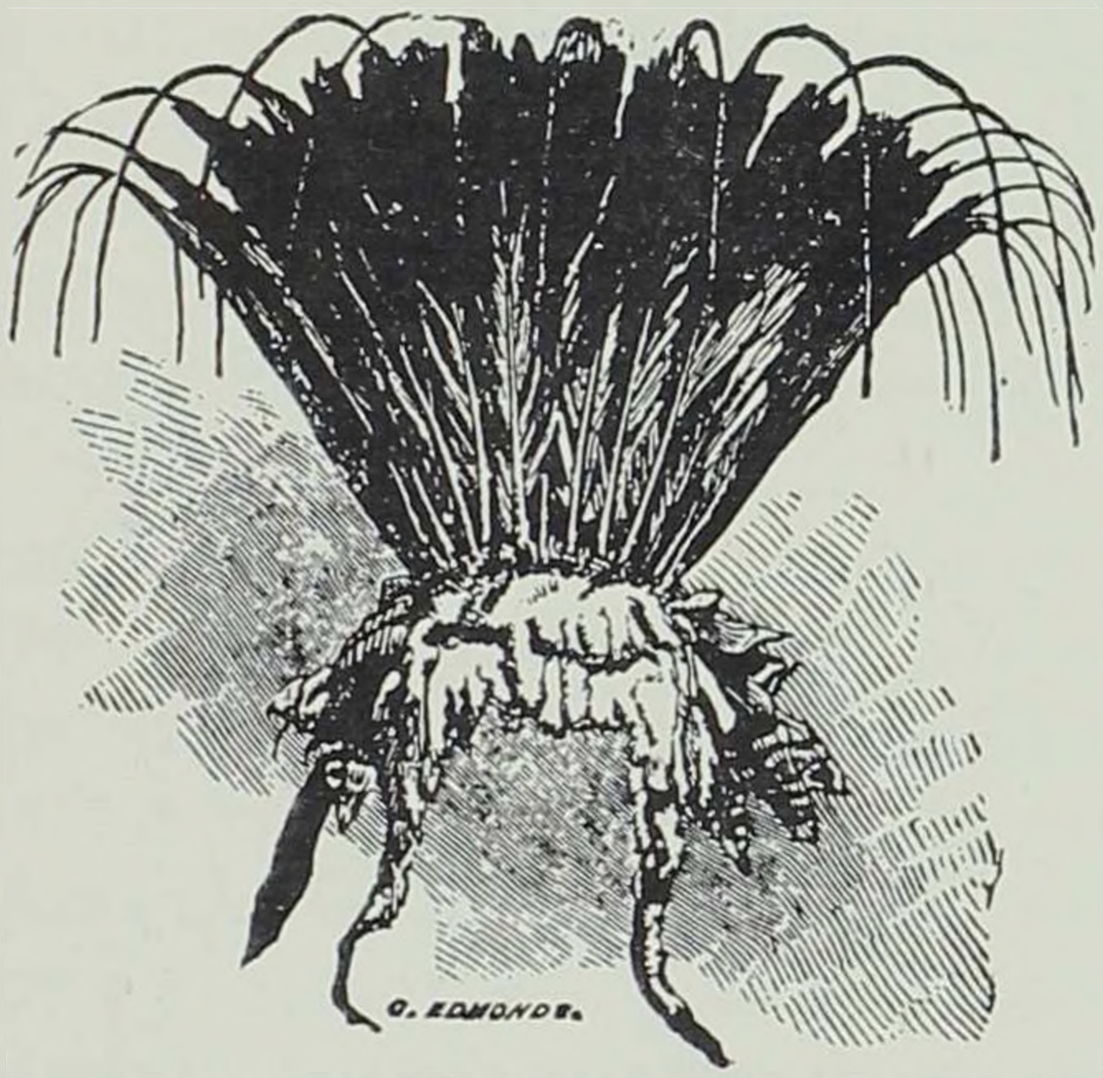
The three Indians who had negotiated Abbie's release were headed by Mazaintemani, or Man-who-shoots-metal-as-he-walks, but more familiarly known among the whites as John Other Day, the beloved president of Dr. Stephen Riggs' Hazelwood Republic. They were, according to Abbie, "quiet, intelligent-looking, middle-aged men, and prominent members of the church at the mission-station on Yellow Medicine.

Abbie was installed as driver of the wagon, which the Yanktons filled with dried buffalo meat, buffalo robes, etc. The five Indians (three Yellow Medicine and two Yanktons) struck out eastward in single file. Soon they reached Lac qui Parle on the Minnesota River whence they proceeded to the Yellow Medicine Agency, and then to the mission station of Dr. Thomas S. Williamson. Here they found the Indians in an uproar because of the failure of their annuities to arrive at the scheduled time.

While at the agency one of the Yanktons presented Abbie with a beautiful Indian war-cap topped with thirty-six large eagle feathers which had been carefully packed away in the wagon without her knowledge. "In the presentation speech," Abbie records, "it was stated that it was given as a token of respect for the fortitude and bravery I had manifested and it was because of this that Inkpaduta's Indians did not kill me. It was also stated that as long as I retained the cap

I would be under the protection of all the Dakotas."

Leaving Dr. Williamson's station, Abbie and her escort proceeded down the Minnesota River. The Sabbath was spent at a doctor's home at Redwood, or Lower Agency, thirteen miles above Fort Ridgely. At the latter post Abbie was showered with gifts before proceeding to Traverse des



The Yanktons presented Abbie with a beautiful Indian war-cap topped with thirty-six large eagle feathers.

Sioux where they boarded a steamboat for St. Paul.

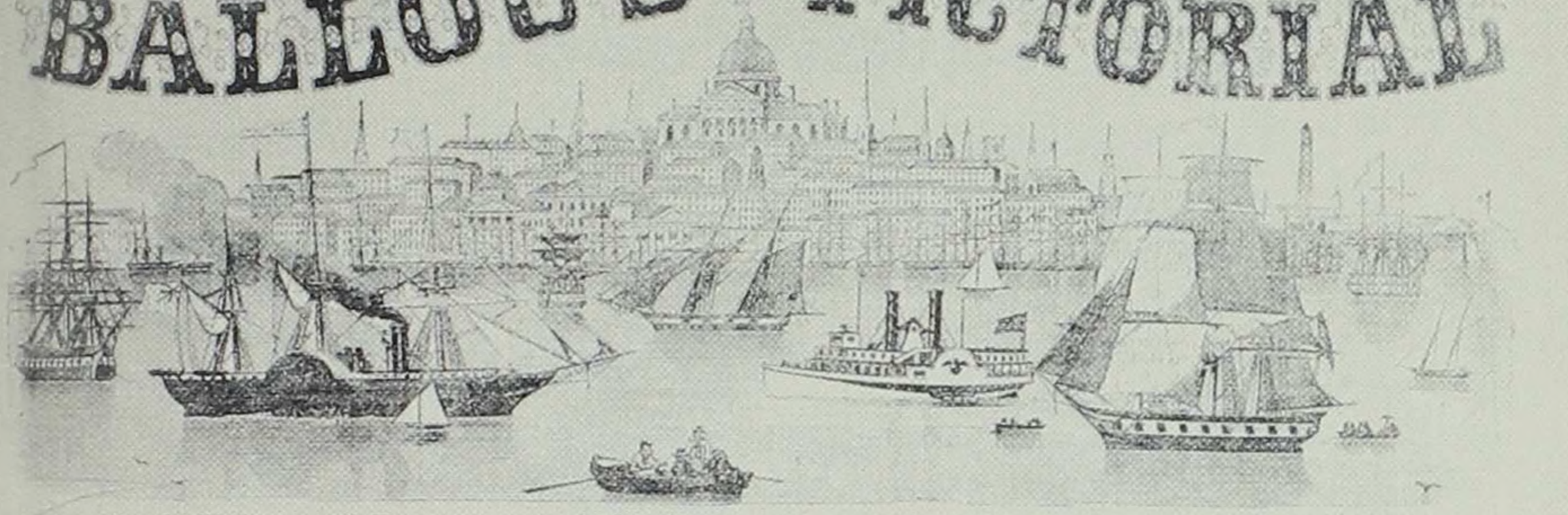
Abbie was taken to the Fuller House at St. Paul where she was turned over to Governor Medary by the Indians the following day. After appropriate speeches, the three Indians were each given $400 for their services. A purse of $500 was contributed to Abbie by the generous people

of St. Paul. Two days later, on June 24, she left St. Paul on the steamboat *Galena* for Iowa. From Dubuque she made the eight-day journey by stage coach to Fort Dodge where she was welcomed and entertained by Major William Williams. Here she learned that her sister had escaped, married, and was living with her husband at Hampton. Her reunion with her sister was a happy one, despite the frightful experiences the two girls had passed through since they had last been together on the shores of Lake Okoboji. A scant five months after the Spirit Lake Massacre, on August 16, 1857, Abbie married Casville Sharp of Hampton.

After varied experiences in Iowa, Kansas, and Missouri, she finally settled down in 1891 on the Gardner homestead at Arnolds Park where she had acquired thirteen acres of her father's land. In March, 1894, the 25th General Assembly appropriated five thousand dollars to erect a commemorative monument on the site where the Spirit Lake Massacre began on March 8, 1857. A bronze tablet contains the names of those who lost their lives on that fateful March day a century ago. Abbie continued to live in her home at Arnold's Park where her story was heard by countless thousands until her death in January, 1921, the last living survivor of the Spirit Lake Massacre.

WILLIAM J. PETERSEN

BALLOU'S PICTORIAL



M. M. BALLOU, NUMBER 22 WINTER STREET. BOSTON, SATURDAY, AUGUST 22, 1857. $3 00 PER ANNUM. 6 CENTS SINGLE. VOL. XIII., No. 8.—WHOLE No. 322.

MISS GARDINER AND HER FEARFUL ADVENTURE.

Our readers will doubtless remember that in March last a party of savages, after attacking a settlement, captured at Spirit Lake, in Minnesota Territory, a Miss Gardiner, Mrs. Noble, Mrs. Thatcher, and Mrs. Marble, and carried them off into the wilderness. Two of these ladies were brutally murdered, and two, Miss Gardiner and Mrs. Marble, have recently been recovered through the agency of three friendly Indians, despatched by Governor Medary after consultation with Mr. Flandrau, the Indian agent, and Col. Alexander. We have been so fortunate as to procure the portrait of Miss Gardiner one of the survivors of this Indian tragedy, from which Mr. Champney made the fine drawing for the central figure in the beautiful engraving below. The portrait of the young lady was furnished us by Messrs. Tuttle and Pratt, skilful artists, who have a large daguerreotype and ambrotype gallery at the corner of Third and Cedar Streets, St. Paul's, Minnesota. Around the portrait Mr. Champney has grouped a series of graphic vignettes, representing incidents of Miss Gardiner's adventure—the capture—the march, on which she was compelled to carry packs for the Indians on the bivouac, and the scene of her ransom. Miss Gardiner is a young lady in her sixteenth year, highly intelligent and pleasing in her manners. Her whole family was massacred by the Indians at the time she was made prisoner, with the exception of an elder sister, who had removed to Des Moines valley, where she is still residing. Mrs. Noble, a fellow-captive, was murdered, and her body was found by the three friendly Indians at a deserted camp of Ink-pa-du-ta's band, on the 29th of May. The red fiends who had slain her had also cruelly mutilated her body. Three bullet holes were found in her head and numerous wounds on her limbs. The friendly Indians dug a grave and buried the body, wrapped in a blanket, with such religious ceremony as they had learned of the missionaries. The next day they came upon the band of outlaws and an encampment of 180 lodges of Yankton Sioux Indians. Miss Gardiner was found in the possession of an Indian warrior, who had saved her life at the peril of his own, when Mrs. Noble was murdered. The friendly negotiators procured her release on the payment of a quantity of blankets, powder, tobacco, and two horses, and having obtained possession of her, conveyed her safely to the Indian agency. On Monday, June 22, she reached the Fuller House, St. Paul's, Minnesota, accompanied by Mr. Robinson, and the interpreter of the agency, and by the three friendly Indians, Ma-za-in-to-mani (The man who shoots metal as he walks), Ha-ska-we-a-ta (Beautiful Vision), and Che-tan-wan (Iron Hawk), the first being a distinguished chief, and the other two renowned braves of the Wahpatuan Sioux. Miss Gardiner received a warm welcome from the people of St. Paul's, who feel become deeply interested in her fate. The day after her arrival, she was formally resigned into the hands of Gov. Medary. On this occasion, agent Flandrau, on behalf of the Yankton chief, presented Miss Gardiner with an Indian head-dress, ornamented by thirty eagle feathers, indicating the number of scalps taken by the chief. A sketch of this cap surmounts our portrait. Governor Medary paid Miss Gardiner's ransom 1200 dollars, besides their outfit.

MISS GARDINER, AND HER FEARFUL ADVENTURE.

The Relief Expedition

The following extracts are from Serg. Harris Hoover's account in the *Hamilton Freeman* of August 20, 27, 1857 [Editor].

Being ready armed and equipped, we left Webster City at one o'clock March 23d, and arrived that evening at Fort Dodge, where we were received by a large and enthusiastic meeting of the citizens of that county, who were already organized under the respective command of Captains Charles B. Richards and John F. Duncombe, and known as companies A and B. It now remained for us to form Company C, which we did, by electing the following gentlemen our officers: J. C. Johnson captain, John N. Maxwell first lieutenant, F. R. Mason second lieutenant, H. Hoover orderly sergeant, A. N. Hathaway corporal.

We now numbered near a hundred strong, efficient men; but as we were principally young, and inexperienced in the art of war, it appeared necessary that we be enrolled under the command of a chief officer, whose age and experience might qualify him to assume the position. "Old men for council and young men for war." The veteran Maj. Wm. Williams was unanimously conceded to be the man. The Major, though afflicted with rheumatism, and the frosts of seventy winters whitening his brow, resolutely set forward at our head.

We left Fort Dodge March 24th; but owing to our baggage-wagons being detained we did not proceed far, but encamped at Beaver creek. We now began to realize that we were soldiers, for our appetites (true to nature) admonished us that we must prepare something to sustain the inner man. To this end we built three large campfires.

and began (to most of us) the novel procedure of preparing our own refreshments. It was quite amusing to see the boys mix up meal, bake slapjacks, fry meat, wash dishes, and act the housewife generally; but it is said "practice makes perfect," and the truth of the adage was substantiated in the case under consideration, for before our return some of the boys became quite expert in the handicraft above mentioned. One of our lieutenants — a jolly good fellow by the way — averred that he could throw a "griddle-cake" out of the roof of a log-cabin, which he temporarily occupied, and while it performed divers circumgyrations in mid air, could run out and catch it "t'other side up," on the spider.

That night we were fortunate enough to secure a bed beside a haystack. In the morning, Wednesday, 25th, we resumed our march. The only incident of the day was the crossing of the east fork of the Des Moines. This was not attended with much difficulty, as the stream was not as yet much swollen. We encamped for the night at Dakota City.

Thursday, 26th. As we proceeded on our journey the trail became more and more obscure, and the snow apparently deeper. Some places the snow was so hard as to require breaking down before our teams could possibly pass. In other places it had drifted into the ravines to the depth of eight or ten feet. The water had drained off the prairies into these hollows, converting the snow into slush, and rendering it almost impossible to pass them.

Those of us who were "green hands" had now an excellent opportunity of learning the definition of the term "actual service;" for it soon became evident that the only practicable mode of proceeding was to wade through, stack arms, return and unhitch the teams, and attach ropes to them and draw them through. This done, we performed a similar operation on the wagons; then rigged up, broke roads to the next slough, and amused ourselves with a

repetition of the aforesaid interesting performances. In this manner we were two days in reaching McKnight's Point, on the west bank of the Des Moines, twelve miles from Dakota City. In this region the snow was about two feet deep, hard on the top, and soft beneath: too weak to support the weight of a man, thus making the traveling very tiresome. Our guides had gone on ahead to select the most practicable route; they were followed by the "foot," and the rear was brought up by the baggage-wagons.

Under all this complication of difficulties, the conduct of our gallant commander, Major Williams, was deserving of the highest praise, and worthy of the emulation of those of greater physical strength and fewer years. He was always upon the alert, as from the reports we knew not what moment might find us in a savage ambuscade. Frequently he was on foot, wading through the ice and snow at the head of his men, by his voice and example cheering and inspiring them on their weary way, and proving himself alike entitled to the name of an experienced soldier and high toned gentleman.

It was Friday, the 27th, that we arrived at McKnight's Point. Here we found our guides, Capt. Duncombe and Lieut. Maxwell, who had succeeded, through almost superhuman exertions, in reaching the point the night before. Capt. Duncombe suffered greatly from the severe labor and exposure of the trip, and was assisted to reach the settlement, where he arrived benumbed with cold and almost insensible. The next morning he was again on duty, and notwithstanding his recent exhaustion, and the advice of his friends to remain behind, like a true soldier resumed his command and nobly persevered in its toilsome labors.

On Saturday morning, the 28th, for reasons best known to themselves, some eight or nine of the party — I blush to relate it — came to the conclusion that a "peep at the

elephant" was sufficient, so they "just naturally backed out," and struck a "bee-line" for home. The cause of this singular escapade was at the time a mystery to me, but the supposition was entertained that they believed "discretion to be the better part of valor." . . . We made no objection — thinking it better to let the "chaff blow off." Therefore, renewing our march, we reached the mouth of the Cylinder creek that night.

Sunday, 29th. We reached the Irish colony, twelve miles above. Here were a number of persons from a settlement in Minnesota, who had left their homes on account of the Indian troubles. These, together with other accessions, brought our number up to 125 strong.

Monday, 30th, left our teams, which were pretty much exhausted, and having supplied ourselves with fresh ones we proceeded onward. When about five or six miles from the settlement, our advanced guard met what they supposed to be Indians, but upon a nearer approach they proved to be a party of fugitive men, women, and children flying from the scene of bloodshed and butchery which they had just escaped.

Tuesday, the 31st, reached Big Island Grove, where we encamped to reconnoiter, as we expected to find the Indians in that vicinity. We were disappointed, although comparatively recent signs were visible. We found an ox which had been killed, his horns cut off, and the hide laid open along his back, a little innocent amusement of the savages. But "nary red" skin was to be seen.

April 1st. This morning, when a short distance on our way, an amusing incident occurred. The Major had sent forward a party of scouts, with orders not to fire a gun unless they encountered Indians. . . .

Proceeding on our way we reached G. Granger's on the river near the Minnesota line. Here very unwelcome news awaited us. We learned that the Indians had left the

place five days in advance of our arrival, and that a detachment of United States troops, sixty in number, were then quartered at Springfield. . . .

Upon inquiring, we learned that the United States troops from Fort Ridgley had arrived the next day after the Indians had left, and that a few of them had followed the Indians a short distance, and discovered where they had encamped the night before, and from the number of their teepes computed them to number about forty warriors. On the way they found various articles of clothing and other materials cast away by the Indians on account of the great amount of plunder with which they were burdened. But those ferocious "dogs of war," after being set on a warm scent, and having their prey almost within their grasp, suffered them to escape unscathed. Our position at this time was rather a perplexing one. Anticipated by the United States troops, the Indians five or six days in advance of us, and our provisions almost exhausted, it soon became apparent that the only alternative left was the painful one of abandoning the pursuit, paying the last tribute of respect to the remains of the unfortunate settlers, and returning home.

Accordingly, on the morning of April 2d, a company of twenty-five men were selected and placed under the command of Capt. J. C. Johnson, with orders to proceed to Spirit Lake and bury the dead, while the residue were to return to the Irish colony. I was prevented from joining, . . . but the following are . . . furnished me by a friend:

Burial of the Dead

Two of our number were mounted on horseback and carried provisions. On arriving at the river it was found that the horses could not be taken across, so the provision was distributed among us, and the horsemen returned. About 3 o'clock that day, we arrived at the house of Mr. Thatcher. The door being shut, we opened it and entered

the house. Within we found everything in utter confusion. Hearing an exclamation of surprise outside, I went out and there beheld the bodies of two men lying side by side, brutally murdered by numerous shots in the breast (where the brave invariably receive the missiles of death). This sight convinced us that we had at least a painful duty to perform, if we did not encounter the infamous villains who perpetrated this cruel deed. We proceeded to bury them immediately. Our captain appointed two to dig the grave, while the remainder (except the guard) proceeded to the house of Mr. Howe, about a mile beyond. Here the door was also closed; on opening it, a sight met our eyes which sent a shudder through our veins and fired our minds with thoughts of vengeance and dire retribution upon the cowardly assassins. It was such a sight as a sensitive person might well avoid encountering, and which for humanity's sake we would gladly have erased from our memories. But there it confronted us in all the tragic horror of a fearful reality. There lay before us, in an incongruous heap, the mangled forms of seven human beings, from the aged grandmother down to the prattling child of tender years, who alike fell victims to the merciless savages inordinate thirst for human blood. After covering the bodies we returned to our companies and buried the two first found, also a little daughter of Mr. Thatcher.

Next morning returned, found another body a few rods from the house, and buried them all in one grave. We next proceeded to Granger's, about three miles distant. Here we found one man lying in front of the house brutally murdered, his face literally chopped to pieces, and several marks of a tomahawk in the breast; a large bulldog was lying by his side, which probably died in valiantly defending his master. This house was also completely ransacked. . . .

We then visited the house of Mr. Mattock, about a half mile further on, just across an arm of the lake and situated in a grove of heavy timber. We found one man and three or four head of cattle lying on the ice. As soon as we entered the grove we could see the bodies of men, women, children, and cattle scattered promiscuously about and mutilated in the most shocking manner. From all appearances here had been the struggle for life. Here was where the white and red man met in mortal combat and closed in the fearful death-struggle: the one for life, home, wife, and children, the dearest ties that bind souls to earth; the other to gratify the most fiendish passions which human nature in its most degraded and degenerate forms is heir to: revenge, malice, hatred, envy, and covetousness, and above all, an inherent "penchant" to signalize themselves by imbuing their hands in the blood of the palefaces, irrespective of age, sex, or condition. The battle had evidently been fierce and hotly contested, but the whites, overpowered by numbers, sank like Leonidas's band, covered with wounds and heirs to immortal fame. The house was burnt, and in one corner the charred remains of a human body was found. Here we buried eleven. This was near the Indian camp.

At the house of Mr. Gardner we found six dead bodies, one in the house and the remainder just outside the door. We buried them all together about fifty yards from the house, on a spot designated by a daughter of Mr. Gardner, whom we met on our way up as a fugitive from Springfield. We buried twenty-nine in all. Several were missing, among whom were Mrs. Thatcher, Mrs. Marble, Mrs. Noble, and Miss Gardner, who were supposed to have been carried away captives by the Indians. Our melancholy task being done, we took supper and repaired to rest. Sleep coming to our aid we were soon oblivious of the past. In the morning we were very much refreshed,

and taking a hasty meal of potatoes we bid adieu to Spirit Lake, the scene of this dreadful massacre, the thoughts of which filled our minds with an utter abhorrence of the whole Indian nation, and turned to join our companions in their homeward march.

April 3d. Reached the Irish colony. The following morning, April 4th, was very disagreeable, rainy, and cold; but as our provisions were daily diminishing in quantity and deteriorating in quality, it was deemed prudent to resume our march. About one o'clock we reached the banks of Cylinder creek, which, owing to a recent rain and the melting of the snow, was impassable. . . .

We now found ourselves in rather an unenviable situation, a prospect of drowning if we proceeded, a prospect of starving if we remained where we were, and ditto if we returned. Various plans were proposed only to be decided impracticable. However, it was determined that the teams should return to the settlement. Accordingly the Major with the wounded settlers and a few others returned. The balance of us concluded to provide for ourselves. . . .

Sunday, April 4th. Returned to the creek to look for our companions. As there were no signs of life to be seen, the conviction forced itself upon us that our fears were realized and that they were all frozen to death. The stream was by this time all frozen over except the channel. Capt. C. B. Richards in particular deserves praise for his noble efforts in behalf of the sufferers. He worked two hours in the severe cold, attempting to crawl over the ice to reach the shore, but notwithstanding the captain's warm heart the intense cold overcame him, and he was obliged to abandon his philanthropic project without accomplishing his object. In justice to him and Capt. Duncombe, I must say that they did all that under such circumstances could be done to relieve their men. Some of

us tried to break a way across for the boat, but the effort proved futile and we were obliged to abandon the idea of reaching the place where we had left our companions, so we returned to the house to await further developments.

Monday, April 6th. Again proceeded to the creek and found the ice strong enough to carry a horse. Crossed over and with joy and surprise found our companions all alive. They were piled up like so many flour-bags "in the most approved style," under a tent constructed of a wag-on-cover, and with a quantity of bedding which they fortunately had on hand were enabled to keep from freezing; and now they crossed on the ice . . . after lying in this position over forty hours *without food or fire on the open prairie*.

But great as were their privations and sufferings, they were exceeded by those of our party who left Spirit Lake on Sunday to cross the prairie to the Irish settlement. They left Spirit Lake Saturday, April 4th, and traveled in a southeast direction, intending to reach, if possible, the Irish colony that day; but, owing to the many deep sloughs which they were obliged to cross, they failed in accomplishing their object. Towards evening their clothes began to freeze to their bodies and to impede their progress. Some of the party still continued to plunge in and wade through, while others deemed it prudent to evade them as much as possible in order to avoid having their clothes frozen stiff upon them. The necessary consequence was, they became separated, some traveling in one direction, and some in another. The main body, however, with W. K. Laughlin as guide, kept a nearly direct course. Just before dark they passed a small lake skirted by a few trees. Some proposed to stop and pass the night. but the voice of the majority was in favor of traveling all night, to escape being frozen to death; but overtasked and exhausted nature will assert her rights.

About eight o'clock at night they were overcome by hunger, cold, and fatigue, and being unable to proceed any further lay down on the open prairie, exposed to the merciless wind which swept past like a tornado, their clothes frozen stiff as a coat of mail. Without food, fire, or protection of any kind, they spent a sleepless night. . . . In the morning they found themselves in sight of timber on the Des Moines river, and roused their last remaining energies to reach it. Those who had drawn off their boots were unable to get them on again so they were compelled to cut up their blankets and wrap their feet in them.

In this manner they reached the settlement on Sunday, April 5th, where they all ultimately arrived except two. These were Capt. J. C. Johnson, of Webster City, and William Burkholder, of Ft. Dodge. They were last seen about five o'clock Saturday, two miles distant from their companions, and traveling in a southerly direction. It was confidently hoped that they might have strayed down the river and found a lodging-place. Every effort was made to ascertain their whereabouts, but without success.

Monday, April 6th. Those of us who had succeeded in crossing the Cylinder now thought best to reach home as soon as possible, as we were out of provisions altogether. After paying our bills *to the last farthing* where we stopped over Sunday, we departed "every man to his tent" and arrived home in three or four days, weary, worn and wasted. We met with a hearty welcome from our friends, who were gratified to see us return alive. Although some of us were pretty badly frozen, we considered ourselves extremely fortunate in having escaped the fate of our comrades. Thus ended the disastrous Spirit Lake Expedition, a second edition (on a small scale) of Bonaparte's expedition *to Moscow*.

ROSTER OF THE RELIEF EXPEDITION

Names on West Tablet, Spirit Lake Massacre Monument

Major William Williams, commanding

Company A	*Company B*	*Company C*
C. B. Richards, Capt.	J. F. Duncombe, Capt.	J. C. Johnson, Capt.
F. A. Stratton, 1st Lt.	James Linn, 1st Lt.	J. N. Maxwell, 1st Lt.
L. K. Wright, Sergt.	S. C. Stevens, 2nd Lt.	F. R. Mason, 2nd Lt.
Solan Mason, Corp.	W. N. Koons, Sergt.	Harris Hoover, Sergt.
	Thos. Callagan, Corp.	A. N. Hathway, Corp.
Privates	*Privates*	*Privates*
W. E. Burkholder	Jessie Addington	Thos. Anderson
G. W. Brazee	A. Burch	James Brainard
C. C. Carpenter	Hiram Benjamin	T. B. Bonebright
L. D. Crawford	D. H. Baker	Sherman Cassady
Julius Conrad	Orlando Bice	W. L. Church
Henry Carse	Richard Carter	Patrick Conlan
——— Chatterton	A. E. Crouse	H. E. Dalley
Wm. Defore	R. F. Carter	John Erie
J. W. Dawson	Michael Cavenough	John Gates
Wm. Ford	Jer. Evans	E. W. Gates
John Farney	John Hefley	Josiah Griffith
John Gales	O. C. Howe	James Hickey
Andrew Hood	D. F. Howell	H. C. Hillock
Angus McBane	A. S. Johnson	M. W. Howland
Wm. McCauley	Jonas Murray	E. D. Kellogg
Michael Maher	Daniel Morrisey	W. K. Laughlin
E. Mahan	G. F. McClure	A. S. Leonard
W. P. Pollock	A. H. Malcombe	W. V. Lucas
W. F. Porter	Michael McCarty	F. R. Moody
B. F. Parmenter	J. N. McFarland	John Nowland
L. B. Ridgeway	Robt. McCormick	J. C. Pemberton
Winton Smith	John O'Laughlin	Alonzo Richardson
R. A. Smith	Daniel Okeson	Michael Sweeney
G. P. Smith	Guernsey Smith	Patrick Stafford
O. S. Spencer	J. M. Thatcher	A. K. Tullis
C. Stebbins	W. Searles	
Silas Vancleave	John White	G. R. Bissell, Surg.
R. U. Wheelock	W. R. Wilson	G. B. Sherman, Com'y.
D. Westerfield	Washington Williams	
	Reuben Whetstone	

Report of Major Williams

[One of the most dramatic episodes of the Spirit Lake Massacre was the Relief Expedition made up of Webster City and Fort Dodge men led by Major William Williams of Fort Dodge. Born in Huntington, Pennsylvania, in 1796, Williams arrived in Iowa in 1849 and joined the expedition sent to establish Fort Dodge on the Upper Des Moines in 1850. He was post sutler until the fort was abandoned in 1853 when he and Bernhart Henn bought the ground for a land company and laid out the town of Fort Dodge. When the Sioux threatened hostilities in northern Iowa after the removal of the troops, Major Williams was authorized by Governor James W. Grimes to take such action as was necessary to protect the frontier. The following report of Major William Williams on the Spirit Lake Relief Expedition addressed to Governor Grimes is printed as a part of the Spirit Lake Massacre story. The expedition was re-enacted in 1957 as a part of the centennial of the founding of Webster City. THE EDITOR]

FORT DODGE, IOWA, April 12, 1857. *"To His Excellency, James W. Grimes, Governor of the State of Iowa.* "SIR: — Being called upon by the frontier settlers for aid in checking the horrible outrages committed upon the citizens living on the Little Sioux river, in Clay county, in the Spirit Lake settlements, and in Emmet county by the Sioux Indians, by authority you vested in me, I raised and organized and armed three companies

of 30 men each, which were as we proceeded increased to over 37 men each. We took up our line of march on the 25th of March, and proceeded up the west branch of the Des Moines river to intercept the savages, who, reports said, were about to sweep all the settlements on that river. By forced marches through snow banks from fifteen to twenty feet deep, and swollen streams, we forced our way up to the state line, where we learned the Indians embodied 200 or 300 strong at Spirit Lake and Big Island Groves. . . .

About 80 miles up we met those who had escaped the massacre at Springfield, composed of three men unhurt and two wounded, and one female wounded, and several women and children, in all numbering some 15 or 20 persons. They escaped in the night, carrying nothing with them but what they had on when they were attacked — had nothing to eat for two days and one night. They were about exhausted and the Indians on their trail pursuing them. Had not our scouts discovered them and reported, there can be no doubt that they would have been murdered that night. We found them in a miserable condition, destitute of everything, three of them badly wounded and several of the women without bonnets or shoes. They had nothing on them but what they had the night they fled; the poor women wading breast deep through snow and water, and carrying their crying children.

We halted at a small lake that furnished sufficient timber to make fires and warm them, furnished them with provisions, and gave them blankets to shield them from the severe weather, and gave them all the relief in our power. Our surgeon dressed the wounds of the wounded, whose wounds were in a bad condition. We encamped there with them that night, posting sentinels and pickets, expecting to be attacked. Next morning we sent them on with our scout to what is known as the Irish settlement, to remain until we returned, the settlers above that point having abandoned their homes and embodied themselves at that place where they were engaged in building a block house. We proceeded on our march, throwing out in advance some 30 scouts, reconnoitering and examining every point where the enemy might possibly be found. Every point of timber, lake, and stream was closely examined, and we found very fresh traces of the Indians throughout the day. From these tracks and trails they had all taken their course for Spirit Lake, or in that direction. By forced marches we reached the state line, near Springfield, and encamped about sundown on the margin of a grove; detailed 60 men, armed with rifles and six-shooters, with orders to cook their suppers and supply themselves with cold rations, each company their own, and be ready to march all night, in two divisions of 30 men each, and surprise the Indians before daylight next

morning; furnished them with guides, as the information we had just received was that the Indians were embodied at or near the trading house of a half-breed by the name of Gaboo. We proceeded with great hopes of overtaking and giving a good account of them; but to our great mortification we found that they had all fled at the approach of 50 regulars from Fort Ridgley. . . .

The conduct of the troops from Fort Ridgley is hard to be accounted for. On Thursday, the 26th of March, the Indians attacked Springfield and neighborhood. The citizens defended themselves as well as they could. The battle and pillaging lasted until nightfall, when the Indians withdrew. On Friday, in the afternoon, the troops from Fort Ridgley arrived all well mounted on mules. . . . Said officers lay over from Friday evening till Sunday morning without pursuing or making any effort to overtake the Indians, who, they must have known, had taken off four white women as prisoners.

On Sunday morning he, the commanding officer, set out on their trail, and followed them half the day, finding their camp fires, overtaking three or four straggling squaws, let them go, and finding all sorts of goods thrown and strewn along their trail to lighten their load and expedite their flight. When he could not have been over half a day's march from them he stopped and returned the same evening (Sunday) to Springfield. When

he ordered the men to return, they expressed a wish to follow on, and said they would put up with half rations if he would allow it. His reply was that he had no orders to follow them.

On Monday he set out for Spirit Lake to bury the dead, etc. He went to the first house, that of Mr. Marble, found one dead body, buried it, and returned to Springfield.

It is certain such troops, or rather such officers, will afford no protection to our troubled frontier settlers. Think of his conduct! His men, all well mounted, turning back when he was not a half day's march off them; they loaded down with plunder, and horses, and mules, and carrying off with them four respectable women as prisoners. The Indians were known to have twenty-five or thirty head of horses, and eight or ten mules, taken from the settlers. . . . on the Little Sioux. . . .

Throughout their whole course they have completely demolished every settlement, killed all the cattle, ravished the women and most scandalously abused them. They stood over the men with their guns cocked, while they were engaged in their hellish outrages. Along that river they approached, and got into the houses through professions of friendship, and with a rush seized the men and arms, taking the people by surprise, attacking in such a way that one family could not help the other; all attacked simultaneously, robbed them of everything, in the midst of cold weather

and deep snows. They did not commence to kill the settlers till they reached Dickinson county. There, at Spirit Lake, it appears that the settlers had prepared to defend themselves, as well as they could, and from all appearances they fought bravely for their families. The settlers of Spirit Lake numbered over forty souls, not one of whom is left to tell the tale. Finding that the troops from Fort Ridgley had not buried the dead, I detailed twenty-five men to proceed twelve miles to the lake, and reconnoiter that district, and if no Indians were discovered, to inter the dead as an act of humanity. Guides were procured, and they set out under the command of Capt. Johnson and Lieut. Maxwell, of Company C. They could find no Indians, but found their encampment, and a dreadful destruction of property. They performed the sad duty of interring the dead so far as they could find any. They found and buried twenty-nine bodies, and found the skulls and bones of those who were burned in the ruins of a house, which, with one buried by the troops from Ridgley, made in all thirty-two dead found at Spirit Lake, seven killed at Springfield, and twelve missing at the lakes, certainly killed. It is supposed they are lying off at a distance, killed in attempting to escape. Some two or three were found who had been shot in attempting to escape, four of their women taken off prisoners, and three badly wounded. I may sum up as follows: In all,

forty-one killed; twelve missing, no doubt killed; three badly wounded, two I fear mortally; four women prisoners. Besides several men from Boone river and counties east of this, who crossed the Des Moines river with a view of going to Dickinson county and the lakes, have never yet been h[e]ard from — supposed to be killed on their way.

Too much praise cannot be bestowed on the men I have had under my command on this occasion. Officers and men, without exception, have done their duty. They endured the greatest privations and fatigue without a murmur. For seventeen days they pressed forward on their march, waded rivers and creeks breast deep, and tugging wagons through snow banks, sleeping on the prairies, frequently in their wet clothes, expecting every mile, after reaching thirty miles, to meet the Indians, as their threat was at Sioux river that they would sweep the Des Moines river settlements. Our men suffered very much, owing to the severe change and snowstorm. We have fourteen men badly frozen, and two lost, Capt. Johnson, of Webster City, and Mr. Burkholder, of this place, both frozen to death in a snowstorm. They were separated in returning from the lake. From the state of the men who succeeded in getting back to camp, both of these men must be dead. Every search has been made for them, but no discovery as yet. So severe was the weather that

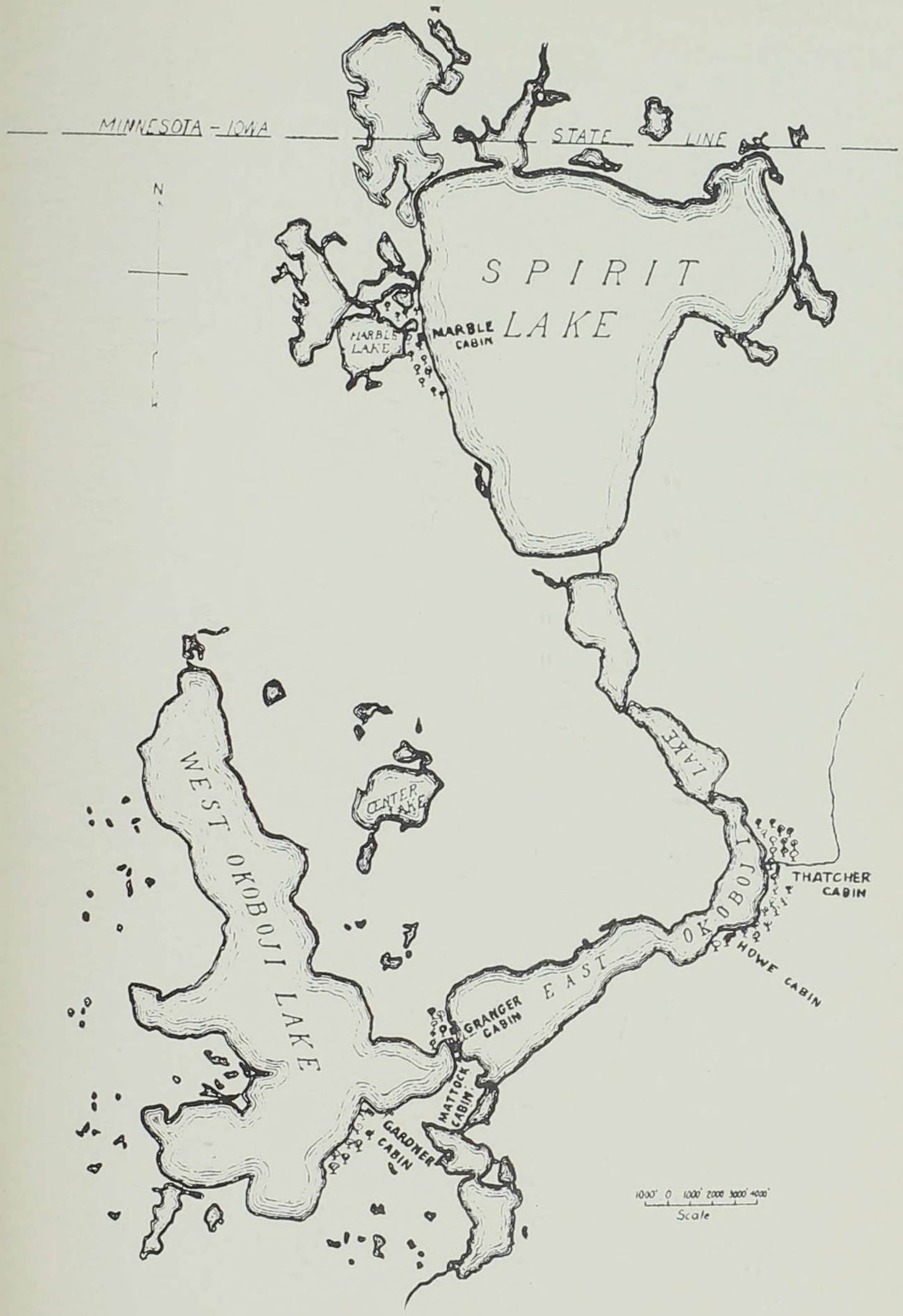
those who were picked up and got in were so much frozen and exhausted that they were crawling on their hands and knees when found, and three or four of them had lost their minds, becoming perfectly deranged, and knew no one.

As near as I could ascertain, the Indian force was from 150 to 200 warriors, judging from their encampments, etc. The number of Indians must be fifteen or twenty killed and wounded. From the number seen to fall killed, and judging from the bloody clothes and clots of blood in their encampments, the struggle at the lakes must have been very severe, particularly the one at the house of Esq. Mattock. Eleven dead bodies were found at this house, together with several broken guns. They appear to have fought hand to hand.

I have to inform your Excellency . . . never . . . have such outrageous acts been committed on any people. We have no accounts of Indians committing such outrages on females as they have done — no doubt committed by the half breeds. We have a host of destitute and wounded persons thrown upon us to provide for, both from Little Sioux river and the upper Des Moines river, as well as our own frozen and disabled men.

I forward this hasty and somewhat confused report; will give another soon, more in detail. . . .
Very respectfully yours,

W. WILLIAMS.


MINNESOTA - IOWA STATE LINE
N
SPIRIT LAKE
MARBLE LAKE
MARBLE CABIN
CENTER LAKE
WEST OKOBOJI LAKE
EAST OKOBOJI LAKE
THATCHER CABIN
HOWE CABIN
GRANGER CABIN
MATTOCK CABIN
GARDNER CABIN
1000' 0 1000' 2000 3000' 4000'
Scale

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The Log Cabin,
Where she was taken captive by the Indians.

Abbie Gardner Sharp,
The Heroine of Okoboji, Ia.

Interior of the Gardner Log Cabin Okoboji Lake, Ia. Copyright,

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